

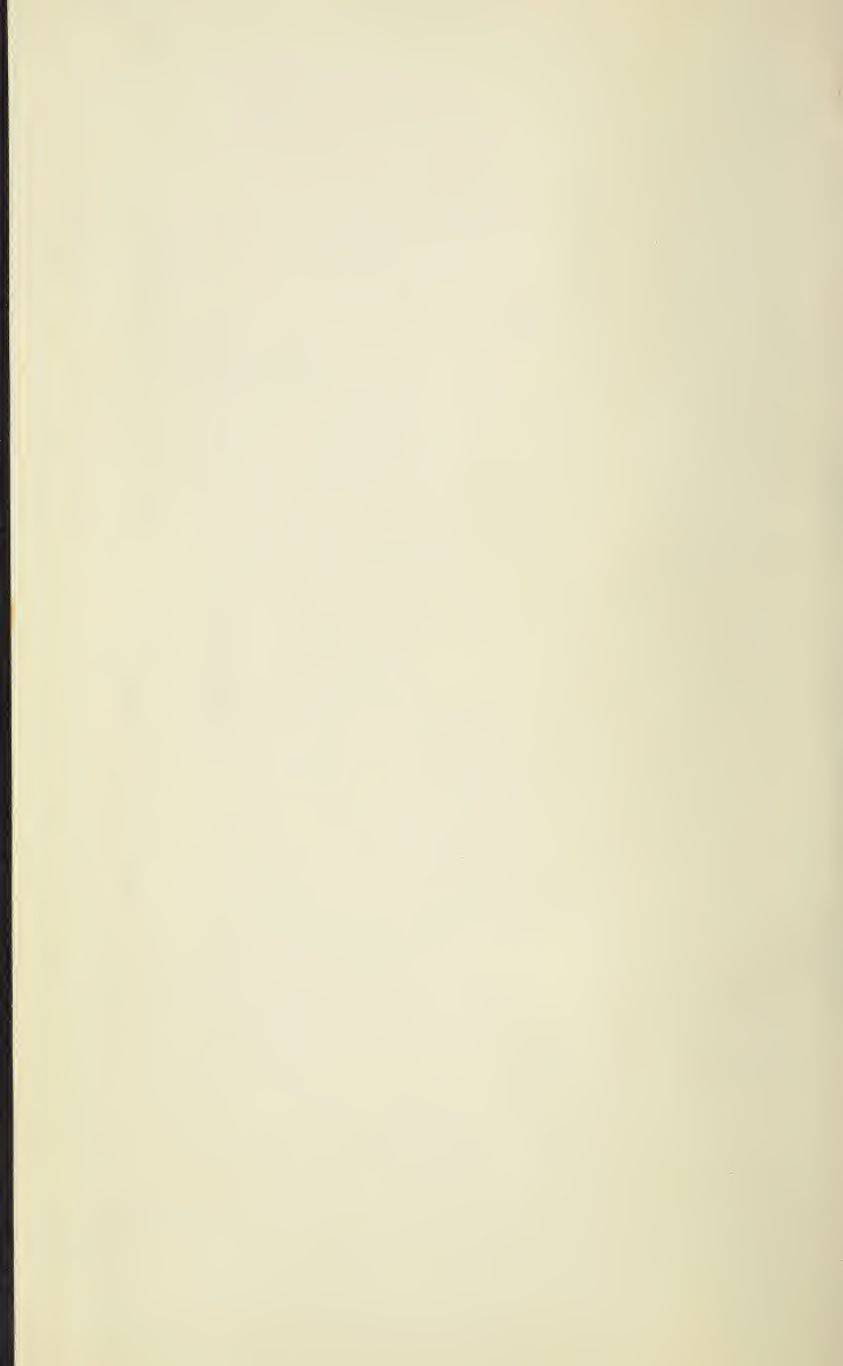




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ROOTS AND FRUITS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE;

OR,
ILLUSTRATIONS OF FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.

BY THE

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AUTHOR OF "ILLUSTRATIONS OF THE BOOK OF PROVERBS," &c.

"And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these
is charity."—1 CORINTHIANS xiii. 13.

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ROOTS AND FRUITS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

I.

FAITH, HOPE, LOVE.

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.”—1 Cor. xiii. 13.

Now, by the grace of the Lord and the ministry of the Spirit, these three have an abode on the earth; but they came from heaven. They flourish in the wilderness, but they are the planting of the Lord. These three! The finger of God is pointing to them as the objects on earth that he loves best to look upon—as the fragments remaining yet of a lost paradise, and the earnest of a coming heaven.

These three coalesce, and constitute one whole. To break off one is to destroy the integrity of the body, and leave the other members to decay. With a view to the exposition and application of the text, consider—

- I. The specific nature of each ; “ Faith, hope, love.”
- II. The mutual relations of all ; “ These three.”
- III. The superior magnitude of the last ; “ The greatest of these is love.”

I. The specific nature of each ; “ Faith, hope, love.”

1. *Faith.* As to its origin, it is the gift of God ; as to its operation, it is the work of the Spirit ; as to its object, it fastens on Christ ; as to its exercise, it is the disciple’s own act—“ Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved ;” “ He that believeth not is condemned already, because he believeth not on the only-begotten Son of God.”

Faith designates the act of a sinful man when he accepts Christ from God on God’s own terms. It is the man’s own deed, and yet it is utterly destitute of merit. If lost, helpless sinners of mankind reject the salvation which is offered in the gospel, that rejection is a substantial addition to their guilt ; but if they accept it, the act of accepting constitutes no righteousness. The Scriptures make much of faith—“ Precious faith ;” “ Thy faith hath saved thee ;” “ Without faith it is impossible to please God.”

Faith is the first stone of the building, but it is not the foundation. It is the act of cleaving to Christ, but all its value depends on the worth of the Christ to whom you cleave. A man may have faith—real, ardent, energetic faith—in saints and images, and priests and relics ; yet his faith does not save him. A drowning man puts forth his hand and seizes with more than natural energy

a bit of froth that dances on the crest of a wave ; his hand cleaves it like air, and he sinks helpless in the deep. He is lost, not for want of precision in his aim, or of energy in his grasp, but for want of truth and power in the phantom to which he fled. Our help is laid on One that is mighty. Christ saves to the uttermost. On the person, and righteousness, and sacrifice, and intercession of Immanuel, we must lean, when the burden of sin threatens to weigh us down to the second death. "Christ is God's," and when "ye are Christ's" all is well. "Blessed are all they that put their trust in him."

Beware how you come to Christ. Come worthless, empty, guilty. Come to him before you have anything, and to him for all. If you cover yourself beforehand with preparations in order that you may be somewhat more worthy of his acceptance, and consequently somewhat less indebted to his forgiving love, you lose all. If any rag of self-righteousness come between a sinner and the Saviour, it will keep them separate. Naked and bleeding must the branch be laid upon the naked and bleeding tree, in the process of engrafting. If any covering were first wrapped round it, the branch would never draw life—the tree would never give it. So, in the regeneration, a soul stricken through with the consciousness of guilt, and naked of goodness, must cleave to Christ crucified for pardon and righteousness. Any work of yours, by way of recommending you, will be a non-conductor through which the light of life from the Saviour cannot run into the dead. To this effect is the pointed and startling protest of the

apostle against the inborn and inveterate legalism of even converted Jews : " Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing " (Gal. v. 2). In the matter of a sinner's salvation, Christ is all, or nothing. The cleaving of the destitute for all to the fulness of the Godhead bodily in the incarnate Son—this, this is faith.

2. *Hope.* Blessed hope ! If you did not know, by tasting, how sweet it is, I would labour in vain to tell you. It is a light shed down from heaven to cheer a dark and troubled scene. It is like moonlight borrowed from the sun to mitigate the darkness, which it cannot dispel. Hope is adapted to a transitory, imperfect state. Its office is to diminish, in some measure, the sorrows of the present, by drawing beforehand on the stores of future joy.

Applied to the richest gifts of God and the highest interests of man, hope reaches from earth to heaven, and fastens the anchor of the soul within the veil, where it is sure and steadfast, so that the expectation of eternal rest may enable the weary to bear with patience the tossings of time's troubled sea.

But, remember, " he never had a hope who never had a fear." Hope is the tenant, not of a heart that was never broken, but of a heart that has been broken and healed again. A pure, bright star fixed high in heaven, it reaches with its rays the uplifted eye of the weary pilgrim ; but stars shine not in the day ; the darkness brings them out. So grief summons hope to the aid of the sufferer. When the ransomed rise from the sleep of

the grave, and open their eyes on the dawning of an everlasting day, this gentle star, which had often soothed them in the night of their pilgrimage, will nowhere be found in all the upper firmament ; for, in presence of the Sun of righteousness, hope, no longer needed, no more appears.

3. *Love*.* Some fragments of this heavenly thing survive the fall, and flourish in our nature. It is beautiful even in ruins. As an instinct in families, where it is not entirely covered and choked by rank vices growing near, it seems one feature left of man's first likeness to his Maker. But feeble, changeable, and impure is all the love that is born with us. At the best it expatiates only on a low level, and expatiates irregularly, intermittently, even there. The love which is strung on with kindred graces in our text, is the work of the Spirit in renewed men.

The emotion only is named, not its objects. Love is like a fire burning, or a light shining. If such a flame is kindled in your heart, its rays will stream forth indiscriminately in every direction. They will fall impartially on great and small, on good and evil. Upward, downward, and all around, flows love—love to God in heaven, and to men on earth—love to the good, who deserve your esteem, and the evil, who need your compassion.

But while, in the text itself, the object of love is not

* The term love is used throughout instead of charity, because, in the present day at least, it expresses more exactly the idea of the original, and is less liable to be misunderstood.

expressly specified, the preceding portion of the chapter is wholly occupied with love in its lower exercise—love to our fellow-creatures of human kind. The thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians is dear to the Church of Christ, as a comment, ever fresh and sparkling like a flowing stream, on the second great commandment: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” But from the upper spring this nether channel must be fed. We must be lifted up to the first commandment: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God;” and thence the stream of love will freely flow. “Faith in the Lord Jesus” is the first characteristic of a true Christian, and “love to all the saints” is the second.

Incidentally we shall learn more about the nature of love, when, in the progress of our illustration, we are called to consider its magnitude. In the effort to estimate its quantity, light will be thrown upon its kind.

II. The mutual relations of all; “These three.” Hitherto we have spoken of them as three rings lying beside each other—now we speak of them as three links within each other, so as to constitute a chain. A chain of three links presents two joinings; under this head, accordingly, two things claim our attention: 1. The relation between faith and hope; and 2. The relation between hope and love.

1. The relation between faith and hope. Faith, as we have seen, leans on Christ, and hope hangs by faith. Faith’s hold of a Saviour is your life, and the consciousness of that hold makes you hopeful. There is, indeed

a species of hope which has no connection with faith. Houses built upon the sand present a goodly appearance while the day is fair. Men first wish that God were not so just as the Bible represents him to be, and thereafter believe their own lie. The hope which they hug is not a living hope. In the hour of need it will be "as rottenness in the bones."

Among the fallen every good thing, whether material or spiritual, is counterfeited. The Scriptures speak specifically of a living hope; there must, therefore, be a dead one—of "a hope that maketh not ashamed;" there must, therefore, be one that will make its possessor ashamed when the day shall reveal its falsehood. If, in a place of danger, you saw a chain whose uppermost link was surely fixed in the living rock, and whose lowest link, a goodly iron ring, was vibrating invitingly near, you might be induced, by the prospect of an easy deliverance, to venture your body's weight upon its seeming strength. If that lowest link were not within the one above it, but only attached externally by some brittle twig, you would exchange the slippery place of danger for the plunge into inevitable death. It is like the fall of a sinner, who has risked his soul for the great day on a hope not linked to faith. The same Scripture that speaks of a living (lively) hope, reveals incidentally how we may reach it: "Begotten again into a living hope" (1 Pet. i.) How has that strong nether ring got into the equally strong upper ring, so that they form one chain, and safely bear their burden? In the fires. It was brought to a white heat ere it could be welded in.

It is by a similar process that a soul's hope is admitted into living faith, and so becomes living too. A cold heart in contact with the dead letter of the truth will not suffice, although the two are fitted to each other with all the exactitude of a confession. There must be a melting heat. It is when the heart flows down like water under the glow of redeeming love, that hope is fixed on faith, and faith is fixed on Jesus, never to part again.

When hope is thus held up, you may load it freely. It will bear any strain. Having such support, you count the heaviest afflictions light, because they are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. In presence of this blessed comforter, death seems the Father's servant, sent to bring the children home. The grave becomes the place where the Lord lay, and through the opening which he made in its dark sides shine the resurrection of the just, and a glorious immortality. All these are enjoyed by anticipation, like grapes of Eshcol brought out into the wilderness to be tasted before the time; and it is hope—hope depending on faith—that flies as on eagle's wings across the separating flood, and refreshes the pilgrim in the later stages of his journey with first-fruits of the promised land.

2. The relation between hope and love. Self-sacrificing human love is the product of Christian faith. The fear of God is the true source of genuine regard for man. Christ's life is the example, and his word gives the law of love. But while remotely and generically love leans on Christian faith, immediately and specifically it depends on the hope of a Christian. Hope leans on faith, and

love on hope. Love, the beauteous top-stone on the house of God, could not maintain its place aloft, unless faith, resting directly on the rock, were surely laid beneath ; but it is not the less true, that both its elevation and its beauty are due to other graces of the Spirit, which are piled, course over course, upon faith.

The only true love is love that will bear and do in behalf of its object. The chapter which our text concludes is one grand anthem on love. The grace which is enjoined, described, and almost sung throughout, is not a name, but a substance. Its two elements are action and suffering. The two sides of living love are meekly to bear evil, and energetically to do good, in behalf of every brother, according to his need and your opportunity. Christ's example is its rule : " Love one another as I have loved you."

Such is love ; but love will languish unless blessed hope be underneath. The analogy of a plant is frequently in the Scriptures joined with that of a building, in order that both together may more fully represent the Christian life. Love's manifold efforts, as represented in the body of this chapter, stretching out in every direction, and leaving no space unoccupied, are like the branches of a fruit-tree. A single stem supports and supplies them all, while itself in turn is supported and supplied by the root. So hope, itself sustained by faith, sustains love in its turn—energetic, outspreading, fragrant, fruitful love.

Even Jesus was, in this respect, made like unto his brethren. Hope in the heart of the Man of Sorrows bore him through his labours of love. He, too, " for the joy that

was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame " (Heb. xii. 2). Hope of the glorious issue sustained his spirit in the struggle. The master, like the servant, had "respect to the recompense of the reward."

The history of Jehoshaphat supplies an example of hope and love in their true reciprocal relation. A difficult enterprise, the reformation of a lapsed nation, lay before him. He made the attempt, and succeeded. The land was full of idols; the people steeped in ignorance. His task was to spread the word of God, and restore his worship. He formed his plan, chose his agents, and set to work. It was a scheme of national education, founded on revealed religion, and applied to an ignorant, idolatrous population. The good king never ceased till the work was done; and the secret of his success is recorded for our use in those few simple words of his history, "His heart was lifted up in the ways of the Lord." A sinking heart would not have sustained a working hand through the labour of love which Jehoshaphat undertook and performed.

Some persons, not professing to be Papists, look on hope with suspicion, as if it were almost a sin. They act as if they expected to make a future life safe by making the present life bitter. It is an error—an error that dishonours God and injures men. To crush hope neither engenders faith, nor brings forth holiness. A false hope, indeed, is dangerous, but what false thing is safe? Do not exterminate the coin because counterfeits are rife. Beware lest faithfulness degenerate into misanthropy. Beware lest you hurt Christ's little ones—lest you quench

the joy of the Lord in a true disciple's breast. When a ministry, swayed by the one-sided tendencies of an age, or race, or locality, crushes every rising stem of hope, by digging constantly and unskilfully among the roots of humility, it produces a swarm of idle professors, who complain of their sinfulness in order to prove their saintliness, but no good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

Hope is a grand essential quality to be sought for in missionaries. Despondency clogs exertion more and more, as it sinks, until it reach despair, and then exertion entirely ceases. Other things being equal, a hopeful Christian will be a better witness for God in the heathen's sight than a desponding one. Hope is the mainspring of labouring love—hope in the Lord, first for yourself and then for your neighbour. There is a lion on the path of every one who would go forth upon the world to win it to the Saviour. The savage African will not give earnest heed to anything; the subtile Asiatics expend all their earnestness on idols. Unbelief is graven in the very being of the Jews by the uninterrupted habits and prejudices of sixty generations; and, mystery of iniquity, throughout the jurisdiction of Rome, a consummate knowledge is successfully wielded to propagate and perpetuate a consummate ignorance. Among ourselves, the young are vain and the aged covetous; the rich are proud and the poor regardless. On a survey of the field, they who walk by sight pronounce effort vain; and desponding Christians, although they say less, will not do more. But one hopeful, loving heart will chase a thousand of these difficulties, as wind drives smoke, away. He who

trusts in Christ walks by faith ; and he who walks by faith will hope ; and he who hopes will love ; and he who loves will work ; and he who works will win—win the world to God.

III. The superior magnitude of the last ; “The greatest of these is love.”

In two distinct aspects love is the greatest of all : in its work on earth, and its permanence in heaven.

1. In its work on earth. It is the only one of the three that reaches other men, and directly acts upon them for their good. “Thy faith hath saved thee,” Christian, but what can it do for thy brother? It does not reach him. It is a secret in your own breast. Its power is great, but it is the power of a root, not of a branch. It operates by sustaining and stimulating other graces. Specifically and expressly “faith worketh by love.”

Hope, in like manner, begins and ends in the heart of a disciple. These two departments of the kingdom lie “within” its loyal subjects. They send forth other missionaries, but do not themselves go forth. Such is the nature of both faith and hope that they will not thrive if they are frequently exposed to view. Do not show me thy faith or thy hope ; but show me, by love’s suffering and doing, that both love’s blessed constituents prosper in your soul. The less that your hope, as such, protrudes itself on the notice of mankind the better for its own health ; but the more it swells within your breast, the more of love will it send forth to bless the world.

On the contrary, it is the nature of love to come out. Unless it act, and act on others, it cannot be. Love

does not begin and end within the lover. Its essence is an outgoing. These three exercises of a human spirit have objects which they grasp, each its own. Faith fastens on Christ, hope on heaven, but love on human-kind. It will not, cannot let the world alone. All the neighbours know it, feel it. Love is like Him who "went about doing good."

Thus, in its actual contact with the world and time, love is the largest of the three. Love teaches the ignorant, clothes the naked, feeds the hungry. Love reproves sin, withdraws temptation, leads back the wanderer to the path of righteousness. Love translates the Bible into every human tongue, and strives to introduce it into every human dwelling. "Love is the fulfilling of that law" which came latest from the Lord's own lips, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel unto every creature." Love, like the stone which Daniel saw cut out of the mountain without hands, is growing greater every day, and will continue to grow until it fill the whole earth.

A tree stands in a lawn alone, and has stood there while three generations of its owners have successively been carried past it to the grave. It grows in a sheltered spot, and in a generous soil. Having no neighbours near, it has occupied the ground with its own roots, and the air with its own branches. You observe the tree from a distance, and pronounce it a lovely object in the landscape; but you see only the branches. It appears as one great symmetrical mass of green, globular or conical, according to its kind, towering high into heaven

above, and beneath, leaning on the sward all round. It has, you know, a strong straight stem bearing, and a deep, wide-spread root, nourishing all these branches ; but the stem and the root are invisible. As you come nearer you may get glimpses of the stem, and by digging in the earth you may discover and expose the roots. But both of these are in position withdrawn from view, and in bulk diminutive. The root, the stem, the branching top : these three constitute the tree, but the greatest of these, for beauty or for fruitfulness,—the greatest of these is the collective head of leafy, blossoming, fruit-producing branches.

Precisely such an object on the broad field of Scripture is the thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians. At the bottom, living and life-giving, but small in dimensions, and almost concealed from view, you find faith and hope, the nourishing root and supporting stem ; but love springs up and spreads out on every side, and fills the observer's eye. Behold the multitudinous, miscellaneous, intertwined, and radiating branches ; how sweet-scented and fruitful each ; how great and gorgeous the united whole ! “Love suffereth long, and is kind ; love envieth not ; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.”

2. In its permanence in heaven. Faith and hope are unspeakably precious to sinners ; but in their present

form at least they are in their nature partial and temporary. If there had been no sin they would not have been needed ; and when sin has been completely removed they will be needed no more. It is true that on faith and hope grow all the love which constitutes the heaven of the redeemed ; but it is equally true that when love is perfect the faith and hope which bore it will disappear.

On this side, the terrestrial image of the spiritual fact is found, not in the tree which flourishes as freshly as ever after the grandson of its planter has been gathered to his fathers in a good old age ; but in the feebler, yet tenfold more precious and necessary grain stalks which germinate, and fructify, and die, within the compass of a year. In spring and summer the tender roots and soft green stems of his field absorb all the care of the husbandman. His life is bound up in these, and he cherishes them accordingly. If these fail, all is lost. But in autumn, when the ripened grain is stored in safety, he sees, without regret, both roots and stems rotting into dust. Such, in relation to eternity, are the faith and hope which grow from the seed of the word in broken hearts during the preparatory season of time. When the love which they bear is fully ripe it will be stored to keep for ever, and they will be left behind. "Love never faileth : but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ; whether there be tongues, they shall cease ; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

Nor is there any cause for jealousy in this sisterhood of grace. To make love great—to make love greatest—does not make faith less. The more precious the ripened fruit is discovered to be the more value will be set upon the only root which bears it. Love is greatest; and of that greatest thing none worthy of the name is owned by men in earth or in heaven, except that which has grown on faith. Does not this doctrine magnify the office of faith?

On the other hand, does any one comfort himself with the thought that he possesses faith, the one essential for a sinful creature, although he is, in point of fact, neglecting the labour which love both demands and supplies;—what is his faith? A root that bears nothing; a stump. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him?” (James ii. 14). Faith, if it hath not the “works” on which all true love ever toils, “is dead, being alone.”

Those who draw their life from Christ may well expend their strength in his cause. “Rooted in him” (Col. ii. 7), they have access to all the fulness of the Godhead bodily: they might—they should be “fat and flourishing.” Getting much through faith from the world’s Saviour, they should do much by love for a sinful world. If the hidden root be living, the ripening fruit should be good and great.

II.

THE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN.

“O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.”—JOHN xvii. 25.

IN the special exercises of the Sabbath, as compared with our ordinary occupation on other days, we labour at a great disadvantage, because of the comparative dimness of spiritual vision, and faintness of spiritual impressions. Sense rules in human life like a tyrant, and oppresses spirit. It is yet another example of the strong crushing the weak. It is an unequal match, like that between the grown lad Ishmael and the yet infant Isaac. The right was with Sarah's son, but the might, as yet, lay with the athletic young Egyptian. The spiritual within us, even where it is alive, is like a feeble infant: the sensual treads it under foot, and mocks its helpless struggle. There is, indeed, an assured hope that the child of promise, once born, will grow apace, and in his manhood both assert the right and wield the power; but the Church, in the meantime, has bitter cause to mourn that the things of the Spirit are faintly felt, and the things of the flesh lord it in the life of her members.

On this account we are fain to set forth spiritual things in forms of sense. By means of a parable Nathan contrived to plunge his arrow deep in the conscience of the king, before old Adam in the transgressor was aware

of danger, or ready for defence. Aiming here with all our weapons at the soul, we are fain, notwithstanding, to employ the body as a handle to direct our blow.

In the march of humanity across the plain of time, the front ranks have reached the brink of a mighty river. We pause, and cluster on the bank, and wistfully gaze upon a happy, heaven-like shore beyond. A broad, dark, deep tide is rolling past. It is like a sea of wrath. There is no way over, and no safety here. Oh, wretched men that we are, who shall deliver us? We are pursued; we are ready to perish. On yonder heights the saved are singing the song of victory; but a gulf impassable lies between us and them.

Lo, while we look, a rock rises in the midst of that gloomy stream, towering broad and high above its angry waves! At mid-channel there is an island now. Next, see, between that island and the happy shore beyond, the gulf is securely bridged. The island and the heaven behind it have become one, and throngs of shining messengers pass and repass between them. But, lo! as we look and long for that blessed place, which seems "inaccessible and full of glory," the island stretches hitherward, and touches the shore on this side at our feet. A broad solid path from the mighty mid-stream rock abuts upon the bank where the tremblers stand; and now in thronging ranks they are marching over from death unto life; and now the foremost are mingling with the multitude already saved, where no enemy shall ever enter, and whence they shall go no more out.

Now, if this were the actual state of the case,—if both

the danger and the safety were of such material and palpable character, preaching would be easy work; or rather, preachers would be needed no more. That the way to life is open would be argument enough for all to flee. Mankind, with one consent, would turn and live; not one infatuated procrastinator would be left behind. Men will, of their own accord, and with all their might, flee from the death which they really dread, to the life which they really love.

And yet all this is real, although it is not seen. The danger has been incurred, and we lie exposed to it; the deliverance has been wrought, and we are invited to accept it. The river of divine wrath flows between the sinful and the holy home of the saved. We are the men who stand on the hither shore of that fathomless flood. Whether we slumber senseless or cry in agony, we cannot save ourselves. God's Son has come from heaven, and stood in the midst of that flood. He, in the midst Mediator, is one with the righteous Father beyond and rebellious children here. He is God's way to us—our way to God. There is salvation in Christ, and no salvation in any other. All this is, and on all this our eyes will open one day: would that our eyes were opened on it now, for "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation!"

All this is declared here by the Lord's own lips. He proclaims—he is the way unto the Father. He speaks not here to us; but he does a greater, a kinder thing. He speaks about us to the Father, and permits us to stand so near that we may overhear his words. The

whole case of sinners, and for sinners, lies in this short sentence of the Mediator's prayer. It is arranged in two great natural divisions, together covering all the space and all the time wherewith the human race are concerned, thus,—

I. The alienation of the whole world from God by sin: "Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee."

II. The reconciliation of some out of the world to God, through a Saviour: "But I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."

I. The alienation of the whole world from God by sin: "Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee."

In this solemn rehearsal of the judgment for our warning before the time, the two parties are the same as they will be when the judgment itself is set, and the books opened,—the just God, and rebellious men. Speaking to the Father, the Mediator intimates that he is righteous; speaking of the world, he intimates that it knows not God.

1. Righteous Father. Father is, indeed, an endearing name, but he is a dear child who employs it. He is in the bosom of the Father: him the Father heareth—loveth always. He who is Father to the obedient bears another relation to the rebellious. He is the world's maker, owner, witness, judge.

Accordingly, the Mediator, in view of men's desert,

and in anticipation of his own vicarious suffering, while he enjoys the Father's love, makes mention of the Judge's righteousness. There is a special reason why this, rather than any other divine attribute, is introduced. It is first and mainly in his righteousness that God has to do with sinners; that the sinners' substitute has to do with God. Deep cause had our Redeemer to cry, "Righteous Father," when he was approaching unto God for us. Righteousness is God's first requirement and our first need. For this the hypocrite toils, as he clothes his nakedness with filthy rags; for this the humble hunger and thirst; for this the law rages like the sea in a storm; and this in divine perfection the Lord Jesus has wrought out, and brought in, and offered free. Appearing as the advocate and substitute of the guilty, our Lord Jesus owns that righteousness must be the rule of judgment, and consents to meet the demand.

2. "The world hath not known thee." The world! who and what are these? The whole human family. And what ails them? All evil things in one,—they know not the righteous Father. The world was made for man, and man for God. The upper link gave way, and all that depended on it fell. Man rebelled, and carried away from its allegiance a subject world. When the god of this world displayed all its kingdoms before the Man of Sorrows in the wilderness, a glory, winsome to human senses, glittered on their treasures and their armies, their sceptres and their crowns. But in the view of pure spirits, alike the one Supreme, and the myriads subordinate. they were only heaps of corrupting dead.

Each nation followed its own form, but all departed from the living God. They worshipped wood and stone, beasts and birds, and creeping things. The worshipped being neither fatherly nor righteous, the worshippers were neither happy nor good.

As oil cannot mix with water, the sinful do not, cannot love the holy. What you do not love, you either never begin, or soon cease to know. Because God is just, and the world unjust, the world, by the sure operation of changeless laws, is ignorant of God. Our first parents, when sin was young, and sinful habits not yet hardened by frequent exercise, gave way to the evil instinct, but were simple as little children in their plan. They hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The tendency was there: already the fool said in his heart, No God. But the art of hiding from the Holy was yet in its infancy. Uneasy guilt soon found out deeper coverings. In a few generations men had succeeded in placing a thicker shade between their own consciences and the face of God. A false worship and a wicked life, woof and warp of the intervening veil, were woven and waulked into each other, until no painful ray of holy light from heaven could penetrate to disturb the world, lying asleep in its sin. "Darkness covered the earth, and thick darkness the people."

But if the righteous God should come to these rebels and close with them in their hiding-place, willing or not willing, they would be compelled to know Him. Yes, as the lost know him when the day of grace is done. While Israel, his own, to whom he came, were tempting Jesus

with the cruel taunt, "Tell us who thou art," the devil, from a deeper knowledge, was uttering the confession, true, though not trustful, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God."

It is of God's mercy that the world, as yet, do not so know God. "Our God is a consuming fire," and therefore it is well that he hideth himself awhile from the withered thorns. "Without God in the world," is a specific characteristic of the unrenewed; but beyond this world, every eye shall see him.

Such, apart from the Mediator, is the condition, and such the doom of men;—in this world, ignorance of God, caused by dislike of his holiness; in the world to come, knowledge of God, obtained by experiencing his wrath against sin. Such inevitably would have been the course and end of all, if Christ had not, in the covenant of mercy, come to us; such actually will be the course and end of every one still who does not in the day of mercy come to Christ. It is a foolish thing to remain willingly ignorant of the living God through life, and a fearful thing to fall, at death, into his hands.

II. The reconciliation of some out of the world to God through a Saviour: "But I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me."

In the first portion of the text there are only two parties; in the second portion there are three. There you behold on one side the righteous Father, on the other side a fallen world, with the chasm of enmity between. Here you behold on one side the same righteous Father, on

the other all the ransomed Church, with Jesus in the midst, Mediator, laying his hand upon both. The parties are—(1.) Righteous Father ; (2.) I ; (3.) These. In two features the second scene is different from the first. In that clause which tells who do not know God, it is the whole world ; in this clause which tells who do know him, it is only a portion of the world—"these," the disciples of Jesus. Further, while in both clauses alike, God and men occupy the two extremes, in the second "one like unto the Son of God" is seen standing between them.

"Righteous Father, the world hath not known thee, but I have known thee." They have not known thee : there is the gate of heaven shut : the little word "*but*" becomes the hinge on which it opens, and as it opens we see Jesus "the way unto the Father." This is the very keynote of the Scriptures ; when men and all their efforts are conclusively shut up in sin and unto wrath, then Christ appears, alone undertaking redemption, alone finishing the work. *Not the world, but I*, might be made the motto of the gospel, whether you have respect to the fulfilment of the law, or the expiation of sin ; to the work accomplished, or the price paid.

Who shall tell how much is contained in the short expression, "I have known thee?" It is a great deep. Two ways of knowing God are possible to creatures. The holy know him by tasting his love, and the unholy by bearing his anger. Both the classes who do know him, and both alike, know him righteous. In which of these two ways does the Lord Jesus know the Father? In both. As the well-beloved of the Father, Jesus knows

him by lying in his bosom ; as our substitute, he knows him by bearing the wrath due to sin.

It must be in this second sense mainly that the intercessor in our text speaks of knowing the Father, for he stands here specifically as the daysman. "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" only Jesus ; for he has felt it all : with the lost it is not yet all over, and on the saved it will never come. When men fell, and the curse followed ; when the covenant was framed, and all that the guilty deserved was laid to the account of the surety ; when in Gethsemane his prayer for a less bitter cup was rejected, and the agony of his soul supernaturally rent the interior vessels of his body, so that the life-blood flowed from the pores ; when the soldiers mocked, and the multitude reviled him ; when the Jewish priests accused, and the Roman ruler condemned him, for owning that he was the Son of God ; when, dying on the cross, he was forsaken both by God whom he served, and men for whom he suffered,—the Son knew the Father,—knew him righteous to punish sin, that we might know him merciful to pardon it.

What next ? We read, "The world have not know thee ; but I have ;" and will the next clause be, Therefore the world shall never need to know God as the judge and the avenger ? No. As long the text speaks of the departure, the word is the *World* ; as soon as it begins to tell of the return, the word is *These*. All go away from God by wicked works ; but all do not come back through faith in a mediator. As to the alienation, "there is none righteous, no, not one ;" as to the recon-

ciling, although the new and living way is open, "few there be that find it."

But while in faithfulness we fix attention on the fact, that fewer return than went away, we must beware of limiting the number of true disciples more than the master meant. By "these" he intended to designate not only the little band of Galileans who stood within hearing while he interceded with the Father, but also all in every land and every age who should receive in faith the word of these earliest witnesses. In express and emphatic terms within the compass of this same prayer (ver. 20.) he has made it known and left it on record, that in the crisis of his saving work his watchful eye and compassionate heart were fixed alike on all his people, out to the furthest bounds of the earth and down to the latest periods of time.

Our Saviour is God. The divinity of Christ is a most precious practical truth. It is sweet in our extremities to know that our Friend, our Brother, is omnipotent and omniscient. He who keeps the stars in their places, and knows the numbers of the sands, will keep the seed of Abraham, although they multiply beyond the limits of the promise, neither missing one in the multitude nor growing weary under the weight of all. The first Napoleon, according to the history which seems authentic, was, at a crisis of the war in Syria, embarrassed with some thousands of prisoners whom he was unable to retain and unwilling to restore. He cut the knot by killing them all. Out of this eater may come forth meat, if the horrid tale, making you shudder in every nerve, throw you

over for relief from all finite principalities and powers, to that "God over all, blessed for ever," who saves to the uttermost of the numbers that come and the uttermost of the necessities of each—who has room in his home and in his heart for all the captives that may be taken from the god of this world, although they come like the dew of the morning. Oh, how far flashed the eye of Emmanuel, how widely spread his love, when he pointed to the little group of fishermen on the hill-side, and said, "Father, these have known that thou hast sent me!" Have you felt these "bands of a man" falling on you, brother, and do you yield to their gentle heavenward drawing?

"These" were no more able than the world was to meet and know for themselves a righteous God. The contrast does not consist in the short, blunt antithesis that the *world* do not know God, but *these* do. The saved know God indeed; but they know him in the Mediator. Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God *through him*. Like David (Ps. xliii.) they come to the altar, and approaching God thus, they find him to be, not a terror, but an "exceeding joy."

It is not only the knowledge of Jesus, it is the knowledge of him as the messenger of the covenant, in the dignity of his person and the completeness of his work: "These have known that thou hast sent me." To know and accept the Mediator whom God has sent, as God has sent him, is life eternal. He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. The sending of his Son to save sinners is the act and aspect of the Father, whereby sinners are

subdued and won: "No man cometh unto me, except the Father *which hath sent me* draw him."

The *sending* is divine love embodied, which constrains me to come; when I come, I come in faith to the *Sent*; and through him I stand accepted before the *Sender*.

On either side, at extremest distance, and in deepest alienation, stand *God* and the *world*. Forth from God on the one side, towards the world, comes *Christ* the Mediator; from the world on the other side, drawn by manifested mercy, *these* come to Christ. All are lost by sin; of the lost, those who come to Christ are saved.

These! Ay, but they are the apostles and evangelists, and saints and martyrs—the great and good of other days—they may come and be accepted; but what consolation lies there for us, who have no such character and no such claim?

You grievously misread the record; look again to the list of names that are written in the Lamb's book of life. Matthew the publican is there; James and John are there, who meanly sought to steal a march upon absent brethren, and get, by dint of early application, the foremost place in heaven; Peter is there, not *with*, but *after* all his denials and curses; Saul of Tarsus is there, with no stain of Stephen's blood now on his garments; the crucified thief is there; and time would fail to tell the numbers or kinds of chief sinners who are there, forgiven, and renewed, and accepted in the Beloved.

See these pure white clouds that stretch, in ranks like rolling waves, across the canopy of heaven in the still, deep noon of a summer day. Row after row they lie

in the light, opening their bosoms to the blaze of a noonday sun ; and they are all fair : they are “ without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.” Who are these that stand, as it were, around the throne of God, in white clothing ; and whence came they ? These are they that have come from various places on the surface of the earth and sea. Some have come from the briny ocean, and some from miry land ; some from yellow, overflowing rivers, and some from cool crystal springs ; some from stagnant pools in lonely deserts, and some from the slimy bed of the Thames or the Clyde, when living creatures can scarcely breathe upon their banks. All are alike welcome to these heavens, and all in their resurrection state equally pure.

May I, spiritually distant and unclean—may I rise, like these snow-white clouds, from earth to heaven, and take my place without challenge among the stainless witnesses who stand round the Redeemer’s throne ? I may,—not because my stains are few ; but because the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth from all sin. I may—not because my sins are small, but because my Saviour is great.

III.

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JESUS.

“Ye will not come to me that ye might have life.”—JOHN v. 40.

THE Messenger of the covenant speaks. Our eternal interests hang on his lips. How intently should sinners listen to the Saviour’s words! “Gather up the fragments that none of them be lost.”

Some of his words are commands, and some are warnings; some are promises, and some threatenings; in some he expresses approval, and in others he utters a complaint. Out of that one loving heart proceed many thoughts embodied for our profit in human speech. The new man lives by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Each is best in its time and place. None of them could be wanted in the full provision of our Father’s house.

The word of Jesus which we have chosen as our theme to-day is a COMPLAINT.

It would be an interesting and instructive exercise to gather from the Scriptures the complaints which were uttered by the Man of Sorrows in the course of his personal ministry, or by prophets and apostles in his name. We possess the Lamentations of Jeremiah; I would like to see in one view the Lamentations of his Lord.

In some points of view they are at once the grandest and sweetest of his words. Taken in connection with his

person and his power, they distinguish him as "the Wonderful, the Counsellor." A command befits the dignity of the Supreme; a threat sounds seemly on the Judge's lips when criminals stand convicted at his bar; promises flow so naturally from the Shepherd of Israel, that they are counted on as things of course. All these words, as soon as we learn who the speaker is, we expect to hear; but the tender complaint takes us by surprise. It brings Emmanuel closer to us than his other words. It is not after the manner of men. Having the right and the power to punish, he pleads. When we need him, he speaks as if he needed us. Getting the homage of all unfallen creatures, he follows the fallen, beseeching them to be reconciled: "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." What a word is this! There is fire in it sufficient to melt a nether millstone heart, and make it flow down like water.

I shall submit a series of observations, all logically based on the text, and tending, cumulatively, at once to open its meaning and apply its power.

I. Men, before regeneration, and apart from the salvation of God, are in a state which Jesus counts and calls *death*. In this plaint of the Saviour the true condition of sinners is seen with awful distinctness. No room is left here for dispute or mistake. The speaker knows what is in man, and what is, consequently, before him. In the bosom of the Father Jesus knows the mind of God. He sees the end from the beginning. On the foreground of time he declares that death is men's character; with

his eye on eternity he pronounces that death will be their doom. If we remain to the last where we are found at first, we shall be lost for ever.

This estimate of man's state and prospects which the Redeemer has formed and recorded, is of vital importance at the very threshold of religious knowledge and experience. Theoretically to deny, or practically to neglect it is to make him a liar, and accuse him of coming to the world on a needless errand,—wasting divine compassion in vain. If you do not accept his view of your own loss, you cannot possibly close with his offer of deliverance. If you begin by disbelieving his word, how can you end by confiding in his mercy? If you think the physician has not taken up the disease, how can you trust in his skill to cure it? It is death: down in the bottom of that deep, dark pit, must the foundation of our hope be laid.

Hear, O earth! for the Lord hath spoken. He who is the way is also the truth. Speaking of the condition which is common to all men, he calls it death. His word, spoken to Nicodemus as a sample of fallen humanity, has been recorded for our use: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

II. In order to pass from death unto life, it is necessary to *come to Jesus*. "I am the way," he has said; "No man cometh unto the Father but by me;" "He that hath the Son hath life. He that hath not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Observe, on our part it is not a word but an act. Suppose you were standing aloft on a platform that has

been undermined beneath, and must fall within an hour. Suppose, further, that one who cares for you, and knows the frailty of your footing, should warn you of the danger, and point out the place of safety. You believe that the information is correct, thank your informant, and resolve to take his advice; but you linger, forget, and fall asleep on the spot. You fall and perish, although you were warned, and understood the warning, and believed the warner's word. Because you did not flee from the danger, it overtook and overwhelmed you; because you did not go to the place of safety, you were not saved. A ministering angel looking on, with no hand of flesh to touch the sleeper, and no human voice wherewith to penetrate his ear, might weep for the falling, but his tears could not arrest the fall.

A dead-letter knowledge, destitute of moving power, pervades and paralyses the Church. Oh, for the prodigal's sense of need, and the prodigal's simple, earnest, honest resolving! Having said, "I will arise and go to my father," forthwith he arose and went.

Beware lest you lose your way in the mist which sometimes gathers round the expression, "Come to me." A spiritual coming is as real in its nature, and as influential in its effects, as any bodily coming can be. In the experience of life we all pass over frequently from one view and one confidence to another. When our fond expectations have on one side been bitterly disappointed, we let go the broken reed, and, perhaps, cast it away with loathing from our pierced and bleeding hands. Thereafter, it may be, hope beams forth from the opposite direction like dawn in the

east. The soul's inward trust is transferred to a new object, and, as a consequence, the life course is reversed, as if a river by some convulsion of nature were made to flow backward in its bed. We come in spirit from one confidence to another, as really and as potentially as we come in body from one place to another. Nor is this a rare experience. It occurs to all, and it occurs often to each.

It may still remain true, in point of fact, that those have no distinct conception of what coming to Christ means, who have not themselves come to Christ. This ignorance, however, will not palliate the guilt, and, consequently, cannot modify the sentence of unbelievers. Every one of them has repeatedly, in his own experience, lost confidence in one person or thing, and come over to another. Out of their own lips, out of their own life, will they be condemned. It is not an incapacity to understand any such change; it is an unwillingness to make this one.

It is not hearing or echoing the cry, "Come unto me," that will save the lost. The lost must wrench themselves away from a whole legion of possessing spirits, and come to Jesus as simply, and as really, as the cured demoniac came to sit at his feet. To put off the old man, and put on Christ, is as real as to put off garments that are filthy and put on garments that are clean, and as great in its results as to put off this mortal and put on immortality.

III. In order to life, *nothing more* is needed than to come to Jesus.

No preliminary qualification is demanded. No selection of persons according to their merits is made. None are

excluded for the presence of one quality or the absence of another. To the dead one thing only is essential—that they should come to Christ.

Neither before conversion nor after it is any other thing necessary to life. It is, indeed, true that faith will not justify if it be found alone; but that is because if it abide alone, it is not faith. It is dead, and its deadness is known by its barrenness. All the living bear fruit; but it is their life that makes them fruitful, not their fruitfulness that begets their life.

To go conclusively off from self and all other confidences, and cleave to the Son of God as all your salvation, is all that is necessary to life. "He that hath the Son hath life." It is not that the fruitful branch will get into the vine; but the branch which is in the vine will be fruitful.

The effects which the change produces have not produced the change. One of faith's fruits, for example, is brotherly love. Hereby we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. Here is fruit, which, by its ripeness and sweetness, proves that the tree has been made good; but the fruit-bearing had no place as a cause in changing the character of the tree. All labour to induce good fruit to grow on a bad tree, in order thereby to make the tree good, is labour lost. Make the tree good; then and therefore will its fruit be good.

It is not the coming to Jesus, and a better obedience, that together will bring life to the dead. Coming to Jesus is, itself alone, life from the dead, and a new

obedience through the ministry of the Spirit springs naturally from newness of life. This Physician knows both the malady and the cure. When he undertakes to tell what lies between the dead in sin and life eternal, he names one thing only, "Ye will not come to me." If more were needful, this witness would not be true. The labour of the legalist to eke out his claim makes Christ's word false, and therefore is more heinous than other sins.

IV. Those who are spiritually dead are *not willing* to come to Christ for life.

This seems strange. Even the Lord himself wondered at their unbelief. It is the very mystery of iniquity, that man's resistance to the divine proposal is great in proportion to the easiness of its terms.

The human nature of the question is graphically represented in the history of Naaman the leprous Syrian soldier. If much had been required, he would have done much; but to wash in Jordan was so easy to do, that he would not do it. Even in his case, however, there was something deeper than the pet of a spoiled child. That easy act was, from his view-point, one of the hardest sacrifices that could have been exacted. It did not require the removal of a mountain, but it required the crushing of national pride in the most painful manner, and at the most sensitive point. Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, were then, as now, accounted by the Syrians the sweetest, and freshest, and most sanitary that flowed upon the earth. To abandon these as worthless, and wash for healing in the Jordan, the despised stream of a

despised people,—this was to crucify the flesh. It was to honour what he contemned, and trample in the dust what he honoured.

These things, although a portion of actual history, are an allegory in their design and use. The leper, divinely instructed to leave his native streams, in which he gloried, and wash for healing in the Jordan, which he despised, represents a sinner instructed to turn away from all his own appliances, and come for cleansing to the fountain opened in the house of David. In the proud answer of the heathen, when he spurned away the humiliating proposal, you may see reflected the inborn self-righteousness of the fallen, and their unwillingness to submit to the righteousness of Christ. Most men would do many difficult things, and do them gladly, for the sake of what they call heaven ; but they are unwilling to do the one easy thing which God requires. Those Jews to whom these words were at first addressed, came to the Scriptures thinking that thereby they would obtain eternal life. They were willing to toil through their task of so many chapters every day, and all their days : they would wear pieces of the Scriptures written on parchment bound on their brows, and wrapped round their bodies ; but, while they superstitiously manipulated the Scriptures, they refused the Christ whom the Scriptures proclaim. The letter of the word became to them like the husks that once held the wheat after the wheat had dropped out ripe. These husks are not bread : there is no life in them. That life is in God's Son.

The want lies in the will. The great Physician points

to the seat of the disease. The sick should profit by his kindness and skill. Some malady which you do not understand troubles and alarms you. The physician is called. Thinking that the illness proceeds from a certain inflammatory process on a portion of your skin, you anxiously direct his attention to the spot. Silently, but sympathizingly, he looks at the place where you have bidden him look, and because you have bidden him look there, but soon he turns away. He is busy with an instrument on another part of your body. He presses his trumpet-tube gently to your breast, and listens for the pulsations which faintly but distinctly pass through. He looks and listens there, and saddens as he looks. You again direct his attention to the cutaneous eruption which annoys you. He sighs, and sits silent. When you reiterate your request that something should be done for the external eruption, he gently shakes his head and answers not a word. From this silence you would learn the truth at last. You would not miss its meaning long.

Oh, miss not the meaning of the Lord, when he points to the seat of the soul's disease: "Ye WILL not come." These, his enemies, dwell in your heart. He stands at the door and knocks. If he enter, these must be driven out. Well, the change would be deliverance now and salvation for ever. What hinders? Only this—"Ye will not." This is the key of the position. Around this spot the battle chiefly rages all through the battle-day. There the strong man armed most successfully holds his own. If that position is ever won, it yields only to Omnipotence: "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power."

V. Jesus *complains* that they will not come to him for life. It follows from this, as clear and sure as the reflection of your face in a mirror, that he delights to give, to be, eternal life to the lost.

Here the Saviour opens his heart, that we may look in and see the love that fills it. I know not any scripture whence the compassion of Emmanuel more freely flows. This plaint, when interpreted aright, is more consoling than any promise—more solemnizing than any terror. When Jesus tells us what grieves him, we learn with certainty what would make him glad. The inference is infallible. No truth can be more plain or more sure than this, that the flight of sinners to himself for life is the chief delight of God our Saviour.

His love to us is wonderful, passing the love of mothers. When the sick child turns away with loathing from the mother's breast, the mother grieves. It was her delight to feel the little one lying on her breast, and drawing its life from hers. To feel life flowing from herself into her babe constituted the keenest enjoyment which her nature could bear. When that flow ceases through the want of drawing, the giver grieves more than the receiver. In these deep things of nature, whether the old or the new, "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Accordingly, when the stoppage occurs, the giver wails; the getter only is silent. The giver bears both sorrows. He grieves for the death of the dead, and for the loss of his own life-giving. As He was glad when a woman in the crowd so touched him as to get life thereby, he is grieved when the crowd gaze idly on and get nothing. The grief

is double, and the gladness too. He bears, or enjoys, both his own and theirs.

Speaking, immediately before his departure, to those who fondly clustered round him, new born, or coming to the birth, he said, "I go to prepare a place for you." All his delight is in being life and giving life to those who once were dead in sin. Observe how a mother prepares for her child. With unwearying pains she makes all things ready; and great is her grief if the preparation has been in vain—if the grave receive the infant from the womb, and the prepared cradle lie empty in her sight. Who can take the measure of that mother's sadness when she feels the babe's nourishment gathering in her breast, and knows that there are no living lips to draw it forth!

So grieves a more loving heart than hers, when the perishing heed not his call, and leave his provided mercy to lie waste. Hear ye him: "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life." He weeps for those who will not weep for themselves, and because they will not weep for themselves.

The upper side of religion is not a sentiment, but a fact; such also must its under side be. The one is Christ's coming into the world to die for us; the other is our coming to Christ to live in him. The work of redemption has been done, once for all, and the story of the fact is the gospel. The Son of God took our nature. He lived, and died, and rose again, in a land to which one of us could travel in a few weeks. He bare sin not his own. He assumed his people's guilt, and offered for it a sacrifice that satisfies divine justice, and washes it

all away. He ever lives in heaven to make intercession for those whom he bought with his blood on earth. This act, overshadowing all others, fills up time and eternity. It is an act done, and the Bible is its history. But the lower and lesser side must be equally an act in the experience of every sinner saved. Mercy let down from heaven must be grasped by the needy on the earth while it is within their reach. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Brother, the plain doctrine of the Bible is, if you do not come to Christ, you miss the profit of getting life, and he misses the pleasure of giving it. When you neglect this great salvation, you mar the Saviour's joy. On his side, which is all a giving, the work is finished ; on your side, which is simply a receiving, it languishes. So far from grudging to bestow pardon and eternal life, He who has them at his disposal stands here to-day ("Lo, I am with you always") complaining that you will not receive them at his hands.

I was called lately to visit a young mother in deep distress. Her husband, who had been in confidential employment, had appropriated a large sum of money as it passed through his hands, and absconded. That weeping wife, with an infant on her knee and another at her foot, said, as she pointed to the window, "I sat at that window and looked for him until these men came back to their work in the morning." A great longing lay in one little human heart that night. A greater fills the heart of God our Saviour, as he waits for sinners, and complains that few are coming.

Jesus, mediator between God and man, suffers two

desertions, and utters two complaints. On that side, God forsook him ; and on this side, man. The answer to the first desertion, " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " came in a strong cry from his dying lips ; the answer to the second is written here, " Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." The desertion by the Father in the utmost agony of the Son, was the greater—was inconceivably, infinitely great ; but the lower and lesser—the desertion by sinners whom he seeks that he may save—pierces his heart more painfully, because the last desertion makes the first for that case of no avail. When we come to him for life, he sees, he tastes of the travail of his soul and is satisfied : when we refuse, he complains that so far his soul has travailed in vain. The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord, " risen from the dead : " the Lord is gladder when he sees disciples coming to himself, as doves to their windows.

IV.

THE NATURE AND SOURCE OF TRUE PHILANTHROPY.

“ And let us consider one another, to provoke unto love, and to good works.”—
HEB. x. 24.

WE may wind off this coil best by grasping the line at its outer extremity, and working our way inward to the heart. Or, we may explore this river best by entering its mouth from the sea, and threading our way upward till we reach its source. We begin our examination of the text, then, not at the beginning, but at the end.

I. “*Works.*” Work is the condition of life in the world. The law of both kingdoms alike is, “ If any man will not work neither should he eat.” Work has been made a necessity in the constitution of nature, and declared a duty in the positive precepts of Scripture. Idleness is both sin and misery. In the authoritative and necessary alternation of work and rest, whether the regulating law is fixed in creation or written in the Bible, God has wisely and kindly accommodated his ordinances to the condition of his creatures. The week’s labour makes the Sabbath welcome ; the Sabbath fits the labourer for the exertion of the week. The varied activity of the day makes the weary hail with gladness the approaching

night ; silent night restores the waste, and sends forth a new man to the work of a new day. These terrestrial circles are as wise in their plan, and as sweet in their movements as the heavenly spheres.

Work seems the law of the universe. Witness the ceaseless race of the heavenly bodies. Witness these unwearied burden-bearers hastening along over our heads, carrying water to refresh a world, and pouring it out on the central ridges of continents, that it may supply every portion of the land on its way back to the sea. Witness the rivers how they flow onward night and day, summer and winter, rejoicing to run their race. Witness the flowers, how they struggle through the earth in early spring, and hasten to unfold their blossoms, and after that to ripen their seed, that it may be filled and fit for sowing ere the winter come. When you ascend to animate nature, you find a still more articulate activity,—

“How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour!”

Everything is working. A non-productive class is an anomaly in creation.

When a sinner is saved—when a man becomes a new creature in Christ, he is not set free from this comprehensive law. The Lord has a work of righteousness on hand, and the disciple yields himself a willing instrument. His heart is more hopeful now, and his hand more skilful. More honourable work is prescribed, and better wages wait him. The prodigal had his hands full, no doubt, and his day all occupied, when, in the strange and famine-stricken land, the double task was laid upon him of

finding husks in the field both for himself and for his master's swine. When he returned to his father's house, his life was happier, but not idler. He had cleaner work and better pay, but he was obliged to work : love obliged him. The elder brother, we incidentally learn, was in his father's fields that day: the younger, we may be assured, was there too the next.

The sowing, and the planting, and the grafting, and the fencing, and the watering,—all is done with a view to fruit. The cumberer of the ground is condemned to be cast out. “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.”

Christ was a worker. He went about *doing*. “Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.”

Christ was a worker, and Christians are like him. The world is a field. It must be subdued and made the garden of the Lord. Son, daughter, “go *work* TO-DAY in my vineyard.”

Fix it, then, firmly in your minds as a practical rule of life for all, that if you have tasted the mercies of God, you must—you will give yourselves to him as willing sacrifices. If you are bought with a price, you must—you will serve the Lord that bought you. To serve is the calling of all Christians, with all their talents, all their days. The Lord requires it, and will give no exemption; the disciple loves it, and will ask none.

II. “*Good* works.” It is not any work that will please God, or be profitable to men. A bustling life will not

make heaven sure. Here is a group of workmen claiming their reward: "Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" So far their plea; now its answer: "I never knew you; depart from me, ye workers." Idleness was not their sin; they came to heaven's gate with a back-load of works, but in the estimate of the Judge they were not "good works:" "Depart, ye workers of iniquity."

The works must be good in design and character. The motive must be pure, and the effect beneficent.

But does not the gospel decry good works? Is it not the distinguishing mark of an evangelical preacher, that he runs them down as worthless? We have much need to make our conceptions clear on this point, and keep them clear. Practically, a disastrous confusion of ideas prevails here. Two things, similar in sound, but essentially diverse in character, are confounded. You make a grand mistake if, because you are warned not to trust in good works, you grow less diligent in doing them. If a skilful architect, observing you expending your summer days, and your manhood's strength, in an effort to build a house upon the sand, should benevolently warn you that the labour would be labour lost, you would poorly profit by his counsel, if you should simply desist from the work, and loiter idle near the spot. The architect, your friend, did not object to the expenditure of your time and strength in building; but he saw that the higher your wall should rise on that foundation, the more certain and more destructive would be its fall. He meant

that you should find the solid rock, and build there,—build with all your might. The gospel rejects good works, not as the fruit of faith, but as the meritorious ground of hope before God. The place of man's works in the Christian system decisively affects their nature. Although in form they may be good, if they are made the foundation of the doer's hope, they are dead, and therefore loathsome to the living. They are the offerings which guilt makes under the pressure of fear to the God whom the conscience dislikes because of his holiness. Those who work thus are workers of iniquity, although they give all their goods to feed the poor, and their bodies to be burned to boot. But when we labour to keep good works out of the wrong place, we do not disparage them in the right place. Beneath a sinner as the material of his confidence, they are not only useless but ruinous; in the life of a believer they are natural and necessary. Life does not spring from them; but they spring from life. As ciphers, added one by one in an endless row to the left hand of a unit are of no value, but on the right hand rapidly multiply its power, so although good works are of no avail to make a man a Christian, yet a Christian's good works are both pleasing to God and profitable to men.

Good works rendered by Christians to Christ, put forth upon a needy world, are not dangerous things. Christians should be not jealous, but zealous of good works. The Lord requires them; disciples render them; the world needs them. What would the world be if it wanted the few that are agoing? Almost a hell. What

would the world be if all its people should spend all their energies in doing them? Almost a heaven.

Ascend now another step in our inquiry.

III. "*Love* and good works." Verily good works constitute a refreshing stream in this world, wherever they are found flowing. It is a pity that they are too often like Oriental torrents, "waters that fail" in the time of greatest need. When we meet the stream actually flowing and refreshing the land, we trace it upward in order to discover the fountain whence it springs. Thread- ing our way upward, guided by the river, we have found at length the placid lake from which the river runs. Behind all genuine good works and above them, love will sooner or later certainly be found. It is never good works alone; uniformly in fact, and necessarily in the nature of things, we find the two constituents existing as a complex whole, "love and good works,"—the fountain and the flowing stream.

The love is manifestly in this case human in all its exercise. It is love from man to man. Like the water, it flows visibly out of the ground in the fountain, and along the ground in the river's bed; but like the water, it comes secretly at first all from heaven. The unin- structed, seeing it bubbling up from the bottom, can trace it no further, and think that the bowels of the earth are the primal source of the spring; but science has made it plain, that the water which overflows there from subterranean cavities has descended all from the skies. In like manner, whatever of real love dwells in a human

heart, and flows along to refresh the neighbourhood, has first come secretly from heaven to fill that heart and make it overflow. "Love one another, as I have loved you." Of that charity which "suffereth long and is kind," the pattern was shown, the fountain was opened, "in the mount,"—not that which was covered with fire and smoke, but that which was stained with the blood of Christ. The love which springs there, is, as it courses through the life of a Christian, a great bearer of evil, a great doer of good.

Love, then, where it exists, will, according to its purity and power, issue in actual beneficence; but, alas, where is the love? How little of it is in the world, and how dreary the world is for want of it! If we had enough of love, we would have enough. Wanting it, the world is a wilderness; with it the world would be a paradise again. Give us this, and we shall possess all. The precise subject of which we speak here is, not the way of pardon, but the path of duty; and on this side the first, and the second, and the third quality of a good Christian is love. See 1 Cor. xiii. This is the grand practical want of the world: how shall it be supplied? For instruction on this point, ascend now another step of the text.

IV. "*Provoke* unto love and good works." Let us attend carefully to the meaning of the term "*provoke*;" bearing in mind, however, as we proceed, that whatever kind of action the word may be found to indicate, it is action on ourselves, and not on our neighbours. As we use it at the present day, it is one of the most

biting, scalding words in the language. If you have made an appointment and kept it ; if, when you come to the appointed place at the appointed time, the other contracting party be not there to meet you ; if, in consequence of his neglect, you lose your time and your trouble, and, perhaps, your temper, you say, It is provoking ; and so it is. If a man who has nothing, and does nothing, contrive to fasten himself like a parasite upon your property and industry ; if, in spite of all your efforts to keep him at bay, the bankrupt get hold of your name and involve you in his fall, he has provoked you, and you are accordingly provoked. But in all such cases, the person provoked is provoked not to love, but to anger. We might, therefore, conclude, from the nature of the case, that the provocation which the text commends and commands must be of another kind ; and, in point of fact, we find that it is of another—an opposite kind.

I shall endeavour to explain this. I am anxious to rescue this precious precept from the misunderstanding in which it is apt to be involved by the modern meaning of the word in our language. Even the English word in its origin means simply to call forth ; the unsavoury signification is altogether secondary. The term in the original Greek of the New Testament literally and really signifies, For the purpose of stirring up, or sharpening, or kindling love. We need not be surprised to find that injunction here. The love that is current in the Church is defective in kind and quality. It greatly needs to be stirred up. It is like a fire smouldering, and ready to

die. Oh, for a breath from heaven to quicken it ! We would fain see it bursting into a blaze, and hear all our jealousies and hollow hypocrisies crackling off in the flame. Love must be kindled into a *paroxysm* ; for that is the original term untranslated, and that term, even in our own language, truly indicates the inspired apostle's mind. All the really effective machinery for doing good in the world depends for propulsion on the love that glows in human breasts : with all the revival of our own favoured times, the wheels, clogged with the thick clay of a predominating selfishness, move but slowly. Up with the impelling love into greater warmth, that it may put forth greater power !

The only other example of precisely the same word in the New Testament is in Acts xv. 39, " And the contention was so sharp between them, that they departed asunder one from the other." The conflict of judgment between Paul and Barnabas on that occasion is described as a *paroxysm*. There, in the history, it was intensity of disagreement ; here, in the precept, it is intensity of love ; but in the two cases the same word is used in the same meaning. Alas, it is easier to kindle anger than love in the breasts of the fallen ! The worse is lighted oftener, and blazes higher amongst us, than the better emotion. A disagreement bursts out between two or three persons in high positions, and, as a direct effect, armies march and fleets sail, thousands bleed, and fruitful lands are devastated. The devouring flame, kindled by a spark, spreads far and fast, leaving a broad black belt of desolation across a continent. Christians, our flame is

as powerful for results on the world as theirs ; but the spark that lights it, like the fire which consumed the sacrifice in Israel, must be brought from heaven.

We see, then, that there should be a paroxysm of love ; but what shall produce the paroxysm ? For this, ascend another step.

V. "*Consider one another* to provoke unto love and good works." The exercise prescribed for provoking unto love conclusively determines the persons on whom the provocation was expected to take effect. It is the considerer, not the considered, who is provoked unto love. By thinking of my brother in his need I may be stirred up to pity him, but the mental process that goes on within my breast does not touch him for good or for evil. He may not know that I am considering his case ; he may not know that there is such a person in the world. When we consider the heathen in India and China our meditation takes effect, not on them, but on ourselves. It stirs up, not them to love us, but us to love them.

The question here, let it be remembered, concerns not the divine cause of love, but the human agency employed in kindling it. It is the Spirit that quickeneth ; but at present we look only to the lower side—the instrumentality of men. When fire is kindled by light direct from the sun, the same two must always conspire—the descent of the burning ray from heaven, and the preparation for receiving it on earth. The solar rays must be concentrated on combustible material, by means of a glass with a convex surface, held in a certain attitude, and at a cer-

tain distance. Without these preparations, even the sun in the heavens cannot kindle a flame.

Thus it becomes a question of deep interest, What attitude must we assume, and what preparation must we make, in order that love, by the ministry of the Spirit, may be kindled in our hearts? Here is the prescription, short and plain: "Consider one another."

It is a Christian's duty to consider various objects, each in its own place and time. It is necessary that each should consider himself: "Let a man examine himself;" "Prove your own selves whether ye be in the faith." It is also necessary that each should "consider the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." These two, simultaneous or alternate, are precious and needful exercises. Look in, that you may know the patient's need; and up, that you may know the Physician's power. But it is another and different exercise which this text prescribes. To consider ourselves may be the means of begetting in us a desire for mercy: to consider Christ may be the means of begetting in us a trust in the Saviour; but in order to kindle in our hearts a self-denying, brother-saving love to men, the true specific is to "consider one another." Self-pleasing is the bane of the world and the Church. It is not the mind which was in Christ Jesus; "Though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." Now, as well as in the days of the apostles, there are many antichrists; and most certainly a selfish spirit is one of them. He considered us, and at the sight of our sin and misery self-sacrificing love glowed in his

breast. When we consider one another as he considered us, the sight of a brother's distress will make our compassion flow. It was "in the bowels of Jesus Christ" that Paul so "greatly longed after" all the brethren at Philippi.

A parallel to this precept, most interesting and instructive, is found in the record of the apostle's own experience, Acts xvii. 16 : "Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry." The term "stirred" in that passage is, in the original, the same as "provoke" in our text, except that the one is in the form of a verb, and the other in the form of a noun ; as one might say, He greatly loves his child, or He has great love for his child, using now the verb and now the noun, but the same word, and in the same signification.

Twice in one day, sights which met his eye at Athens suddenly and totally changed the apostle's plans. His first intention was to labour there, for a time at least, alone ; but as soon as he caught a glimpse of the city from a neighbouring eminence, he sent back to Berea an urgent request that Timothy and Silas should join him with all speed. His purpose then was to wait till these two faithful friends should come up, that they might begin their mission in partnership, and sustain each other in its toils. But in forming this resolution, Paul knew neither Athens the field, nor himself the labourer. The spirit of the prophet was not, on that occasion, subject to the prophet. Determined to postpone the commencement of the work till the arrival of his brethren, Paul

passed through the gates of the Grecian capital and walked along its streets. Blind alike to the symmetry of its marble monuments and the polish of its living inhabitants, he saw only the vile idolatry with which it teemed. Idols, idols everywhere, but nowhere a glimpse of the true God, or the need of sinners ! He looked and mused ; as he was musing the fire burned. He could not bide his time ; he could not hold his peace. The fire that burned quickly burst through. Neither counting the cost nor caring for consequences, he instantly struck in with all his might, to turn the idolaters "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

So a single soldier, marching far in advance of the army, to obtain information and probe for danger, comes suddenly and unexpectedly upon the main body of the enemy in battle array. Kindling at the sight, he first turns round, and by a trumpet blast summons his comrades to come quickly up ; then draws his sword, and strikes home, alone against a host. Well done, good soldier of Jesus Christ !

Thus we see clearly how the prescription operated in that case. This man considered these idolaters, and the instant effect was a paroxysm of love in his heart, issuing in beneficent effort. But will the same application be in all cases followed by the same result ? If one man consider another, and see him in distress, will self-denying, efficient love to the sufferer forthwith fill the observer's heart, as effect follows cause in nature ? Ah ! surely that rule does not always hold good.

See an opposite result in the smallest of human affairs,.

and the largest. Here is a young child with a toy in his hand, which has been in his possession a whole day, and of which, consequently, he is weary, looking on a still younger child playing with a toy that seems new. This human being is considering that other human being, and, according to the sequence marked in the text, he should be stirred up to love and good works ; but, instead, you see the elder child snatch the coveted plaything from the younger, and beat him when he reclaims against the wrong. On a larger scale you may see the same process repeated. A king and government look across the border, and observe a neighbouring king and government in trouble. Instead of love, covetousness is kindled ; and instead of good works, invasion and robbery follow. Between those two extremes of smallest and greatest, the space is occupied by whole legions of similar examples. "Consider one another ;" so we do, but alas ! the consideration does not always stir up love and draw forth kindness.

Something is wanting yet. The love and the look on one another which seemed, when we saw them first, to be the head waters of our river, turn out to be but tarns on the elevated moorland, which must themselves be filled by deeper and more perennial springs that rise on a higher level.

One step higher, and we reach the real spring at last.

VI. "*And* consider one another, to provoke unto love and good works." I would not play with a word ; I would not extract the doctrines of grace from a copulative conjunction. But in this passage, the little word "*and*"

is the link by which all that we have yet gotten hangs on the higher,—hangs on the highest.

The exhortation to consider is the last of three which are given in an exact logical series, occupying verses 22-24. You will better observe their relation if you read the precepts alone in succession, omitting the matter, most precious in itself, which fills the interstices. “Let us draw near,”—“let us hold fast,”—“and let us consider.” The last does not stand alone. Alone it would be of no avail. As well might you expect a cure, if you should administer only the last of three ingredients in your physician’s prescription.

The first requisite, as written in the 22d verse, is to come yourself to the blood of Christ for pardon. The second, as written in the 23d verse, is to hold fast by hope what you have attained by faith. The third, as written in the 24th verse, is to consider one another with a view to stir up love and bring forth active beneficence. Come to the Saviour for the cleansing of your own conscience, and abide in peace under the light of his countenance: then and thence, look out upon your brother: the result of the combination will be thoughts of love and acts of kindness, as certainly and as uniformly as any of the sequences in nature. He who has drawn near, and is holding fast,—that is, he who has himself been forgiven through the blood of the Lamb, and is living in the consciousness of being accepted in the Beloved, cannot hate and hurt his brother.

The act of considering or looking upon an object is of no avail to direct aright your own course, apart from the posi-

tion in which you stand when you make your observations. A red light shines aloft at the narrow entrance of a safe harbour. A ship sweeping along the coast in a storm, sees the light, and makes straight for it through the waves and the darkness. She strikes a rock, and goes down in deep water. Why? This is the harbour, and the light she made for marks its mouth. Ah! it is not enough that you see the light; you must see it from a particular position, and make for it then. The right position is always correctly determined and laid down on the charts. Generally it is fixed by one or more other lights which you must see in line before you head for the harbour.

“Consider one another,”—that is the last and lowest of the three lights which lead to love. The course is marked for the Christian in his chart. One clause of the instructions is, Keep your eye on that light, and run in; but another clause in combination with it, equally divine and equally necessary, intimates, that ere you can go in with safety to yourself or benefit to others, you must get into line with these other two lights which stretch away upward, and lean at last on heaven.

Authors who are under the guidance of divine inspiration, are not on that account less apt to repeat their own conceptions in other combinations and other forms. Elsewhere in Paul’s writings we meet the same things in the same order, in circumstances which demonstrate that the power of the last depends on the union of all,—that the lower links hang absolutely on the higher. Draw near, hold fast, and consider in order to love. “Faith, Hope, Charity these three.” Ay, *these three* you may,

through the grace of the Spirit, get and keep ; but the last one will not live alone. Severed from the group, it dies. He who has himself come to God in Christ and found mercy ; who in all life's tossings holds fast by his first hope, as the anchor of his soul, with every new strain of temptation fixing its fluke the deeper in sure bedding within the veil,—he, when he considers a neighbour in need, is, by the laws of the new creation, provoked unto love and good works.

You have more confidence in the physician's prescription if you know that, in the same disease, himself has experienced its efficacy. Paul, we know, practised this course of spiritual exercise before he prescribed it. He lived it first, and preached it then. He had considered the Athenians, as they bowed before their idols, and cast their offerings on the altar of the unknown God. His heart had burned within him at the sight. That internal fire had precipitated him with all his force on the work of enlightening the ignorant, and liberating the enslaved. He had tried his own prescription on himself ; having found it efficacious, he publishes it for the benefit of all.

But Paul had taken all the three ingredients together, ere his heart was stirred up to love by the sight of a brother in distress. From his own experience he knew that the last alone is utterly barren of good. Saul's heart lay cold and still, like a frozen lake swept by a tempest, while the ruffian murderers, whom he hounded on, were shedding Stephen's blood in his sight. The martyr's eyes were raised to heaven, and a light from heaven made his face shine like an angel's before the

time ; the martyr's last prayer was uttered, and its gentle accents fell on the persecutor's ear ; but Saul of Tarsus felt no softness quivering then about his heart. A mighty change had passed upon the man, between the time when he saw unmoved Christ's first martyr die, and the time when the sight of Athenian idolatry kindled in his breast a holy jealousy for God, and threw him headlong, a solitary enthusiast, upon the hostility of a whole nation. While the objects remain similar, the observer's stand-point has been changed. He has drawn near with a true heart in the full assurance of faith, and holds fast the blessed hope in Christ, which through faith he at first attained. Now, from the standing of a sinner saved, and in the spirit of a saint rejoicing, he looks forth upon a lost world ; the look lights up all that is within him into a flame of self-sacrificing love.

V.

THE PLACE OF THE LAW IN THE SALVATION
OF SINNERS.

“ For I was alive without the law once ; but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”—Rom. vii. 9.

A FREE salvation has been provided : the world's chief need now is a sense of sin. It is not food that is wanting, but hunger. There is healing balm at hand ; but where are the broken hearts ? The work of Christ is complete ; we need to-day the Spirit's ministry. If we were brought down, the end were already sure, for God is pledged to exalt the lowly. “ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom.”

Christ is preached in our land, in our day. Pardon through his blood is published free to all. His name has become a common sound on earth, even as it is in heaven. But privilege neglected does not save. It is mercy accepted that lifts a sinner up to heaven ; mercy offered becomes a makeweight in the doom of the lost. It is not Christ in the Bible, Christ in the creed, Christ in the sermon ; but “ Christ in you the hope of glory.” It is not, Blessed are they who have bread, like manna from heaven, lying round their dwellings or trampled under their feet ; but, Blessed are they that hunger. The rich provision of the covenant is set forth in vain to guests

who are already satiated with a different and more congenial aliment.

The text does not directly publish the fulness of a Saviour ; but it lays open the emptiness of a sinner. It is not the first and great commandment of the gospel, Look up unto Jesus ; but it is the second which is like unto it, Look down into yourself. These two exercises go together, and constitute the two sides of the spiritual life. The one we ought to do ; but the other we ought not to leave undone.

In this chapter we have a brief, but exquisitely graphic specimen of autobiography. It is the history of a holy war, in which the writer was at once the battle-field and the combatant. It is a chart drawn by inspiration, of the pilgrims' route from the City of Destruction to the gate of the New Jerusalem. Here the man himself, guided by the Spirit, tells the story of his course—his starting point under the wrath of God due to sin, his hard warfare by the way, and his glorious victory at last. In one short verse you have a bird's eye view of the whole campaign. In these few lines you may trace a sinner's footsteps on the passage over from death unto life.

The text contains explicitly or implicitly these three things :—

1. A life which a man has in himself, and of himself.
2. The passage out of that life by a dying.
3. The new life into which that dying brings him.

1. The life which Paul at first possessed of his own :
“ I was alive without the law once.”

2. The process of ejection from that life : " The commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

3. Another life which he then attained ; for he does not say, I am dead ; but, I died. The death is a thing past, and he utters this testimony from the land of the living.

In the books of Moses you may find in very large letters the same three things which this short text contains. The things that happened to the Hebrews happened to them for ensamples. God in providence arranged occurring events then in such a manner as to constitute types, whereby we in this latter day might print our own spiritual history.

1. In Egypt Israel were slaves, and yet they were satisfied with the carnal comforts that were agoing there, and listless about the liberty to which their great leader beckoned them : this is like Paul's first life, with which he was quite satisfied, " I was alive," &c.

2. The exodus, comprehending the Red Sea at its commencement, the perils of the wilderness during its course, and the passage of Jordan at its close, correspond to Paul's escape, " The commandment came," &c.

3. The promised land, with its plenty, and liberty, and worship, into which Israel entered at a bound as they emerged from Jordan, corresponds to Paul's new life in the kingdom of God.

I. A life which a man enjoys in and of himself before he knows God : " I was alive without the law once."

This is the natural state of the fallen. It is here called life, and elsewhere it is called death. The wide diversity of the names employed to designate the same thing need not cause surprise. The one term expresses the true state of the man, and the other term expresses the man's own view of his state. In God's sight it is death : in his own imagination it is life. Paul is here giving the view which he took of his unconverted state, when he was in it. I was alive, I lived once. Ask the converted Paul what he now thinks of his former condition ; he will answer, I was dead in trespasses and sins. Here he is describing his own former estimate of his own former state. He thought his life was good, and counted therefore on God's approval.

But how could he so far deceive himself? Sins of thought, word, and deed, enough to condemn him, he might have seen daily in his own life. How could he be so blind as to count himself just with God, while he was running counter to the law with all his might? The explanation is given here. He was alive "without the law." He could not have lived with it. He maintained a good opinion of himself, by keeping God's law away from his conscience. The craft by which a hypocrite lives is to keep the law in its spirit from reaching his heart. If the light of God's countenance should at any time find an entrance into his soul, it would be a spark on the train of his confidence.

Why have we so much peace on earth where there is so much unpardoned sin—so many unrenewed hearts? How can men move about happy and mirthful with the

wrath of God treasured over them? How can immortal creatures dance and laugh on the brink of perdition? They live as Saul of Tarsus lived, without God's law. They either keep it altogether at a distance, or admit it adulterated and disguised. We hear of daring speculators cooking the accounts of mercantile companies, in order to stave off the evil day. Bolder cheats modify the law of God, ere they admit it into their consciences, that its incoming may not disturb their repose. Instead of going to God's word for the law, they go first into their own hearts and take the measure of their own tastes; on that mould they frame a law, and call it God's. If there is a malformation in some member of your body, and an order is given for an instrument or type to reduce its irregularities, and bring it back to a normal condition, you dread the pain of the anticipated operation. Dreading the pain, you secretly take a cast of your own crooked limb, and thereon mould the instrument. When the instrument so prepared is with due formality afterwards laid upon the limb, although the mould is made of iron and pressed fully home, it will not hurt the patient. His limb will feel easy, but it will not be made straight. Thus men go to their own hearts, and cast thereon their conception of the divine law, and, for form's sake, ostentatiously apply the thing that is labelled God's word to their own hearts again, but the application never makes them cry. The flesh is not crucified. The high things of an evil heart are not brought low; its crooked parts are not made straight. The process is pleasant, and it serves the deceiver for a religion. It is a prophet according to

Ahab's own heart; it never prophesies evil concerning him, but only good. The old man is not killed by the law of God as it comes from heaven, but soothed by a forged instrument which falsely bears its name.

Thus, when we frame a rule on the model of our own attainments, and then by sleight of hand pass it off as the law of God, its application cuts off no right arm, and plucks out no right eye,—crucifies no lust, and disappoints no carnal expectation. After the visit of such a law the Pharisee is left standing still on his feet, lifting up his eye unabashed to heaven, and impudently magnifying his own righteousness.

The system on which the legalist proceeds is to expect that the Judge will overlook failings, and take the good will for the deed. When you stand on this principle, no conceivable amount of shortcoming will damp your hope. The more indulgence you need, the more you demand. As you advance with your encroachments, this shadow whom you call God's law retires and gives you room. The law which would be your death is kept out of the way, and therefore you contrive to live.

II. The exodus from that Egypt; the escape from that false life by a dying: "The commandment came, sin revived, and I died."

1. "The commandment came." It is no longer an imitation law, modelled on the measure of his own attainments, which might be pressed upon his conscience, and yet not extinguish his self-righteous life. It is now The Commandment. It is the unchanging will of the un-

changing God—the word which liveth and abideth for ever. It is a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces. This law comes, not taking the shape which a man's guilty heart desires to give it, but keeping faithfully every line of righteousness that it got at first from God. When the law comes to the man, its Author comes with it, and the culprit dare not put forth his hand to blunt its awful edge. It comes unbidden, and no tears can make it turn away. Convincing light goes before it, and vengeance follows at its back. It comes proclaiming its uniform demand: "Be ye holy, for I am holy;" uttering its irrevocable sentence: "The soul that sinneth it shall die."

This new-comer is felt an intruder within the conscience, and an authority over it. Hitherto the man, in all his active and well-favoured religiousness, had merely played at law and gospel, justice and mercy. He taught a shadowy image, called law, to go through certain solemn evolutions in his presence; but it came and went at his nod, and although it stalked about with much pomp and circumstance, he feared not the phantom which himself had conjured up. He had procured a painted fire, which maintained the appearance of heat, and yet did not burn him when he laid it in his bosom. But now the image had started into life in his hands; the picture had, by the breath of the Spirit, been kindled into a real flame. The law became within him, like the face of God, a consuming fire. It came, working its way into all the interstices of his heart and his history; it came, elastic and pliant like the air of heaven, pouring itself

into every crevice, and folding his whole soul in one dread embrace. This commandment came into the man, and found him "enmity against God."

2. "Sin revived" at the entrance of this visitant. He speaks still of his state as it appeared to his own consciousness during the process, not as it truly was in the sight of God. It was not by the coming of the commandment that sin was brought to life within him. Before that time sin lived, sin reigned, in his members; but then and thereby he first felt sin, like a serpent creeping about his heart, and loathed its presence.

Hitherto sin had been wasting him, but he knew it not. The disease was undermining his life, without giving him pain. The evil spirit met no opposition, and therefore produced no disturbance. The commandment coming in did not cause, but only detected sin. "I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet." With great precision and transparency the apostle here defines his own meaning. In the general, he would not have known sin if the law had not revealed it; in particular, and as an example, he would not have known sinful desires if the tenth commandment had not forbidden them. He does not say, "I had not sinned but for the law." He was sinning before the law in its power came in contact with his conscience; but he thought, meantime, that all his life was righteousness. It was by the light of the commandment, when it came, that he discovered the sin which had all along been living and reigning in his heart and life.

The course of his life was like a river flowing through a level plain, slowly but steadily, toward the sea. So smooth is its surface, that a traveller approaching could not tell in what direction it is flowing, or whether it is flowing at all. A rock at mid-channel, protruding above the surface, reveals the current by opposing it. An obstruction makes known both the direction and the velocity of the river's flow. But the rock that detects the movement did not produce it. Such is the relation between sin in the soul and the law which reveals it. Life is rolling downward like a river,—one great volume of enmity against God. Because all is sin, the self-deceived man does not notice that there is any. When the law of God gets a footing within, a commotion round the point of contact suddenly makes it known that hitherto the whole life has been “without God in the world.”

Further : as the rock in the river's bed did not cause, neither is it able to reverse the current. It can only show that there is a stream, giving some indication of its direction and its speed. Although impeded and chafed into foam at the spot, the river rises to the difficulty, and rushes down more rapidly than before. It is thus with the commandment when it opposes sin in a human heart. If it remain alone, although it has power to disturb, it has not power to renew. “The king's heart is as a river of water,” and it cannot be turned to holiness by the law which proclaims its sin. What the law could not do, God did by another agent, on another plan.

The difference between a man who is “without the

law," and a man into whose conscience "the commandment has come," is not that the one continues sinning and the other has ceased to sin. The distinction rather is, that the one tastes the pleasures of sin, such as they are, while the other writhes at its bitterness. In the one the stream of evil flows smoothly; in the other it is disturbed by alarming convictions. In both the fountain remains the same, only evil, and that continually. The law, where it comes in power, may mar the smoothness of the river's flow; but can neither change its course nor seal its spring.

Observe here, in passing, that the coming of the commandment for the conviction of sin is not necessarily the work of a day or an hour. In Paul's case, indeed, the process was very short. During that journey to Damascus, it seems to have begun and ended. But in most cases, especially where the bulk of the people have been accustomed from infancy to the reading of the Bible and the preaching of Christ, the law enters the conscience, as a besieging army wins a fortress, by slow and gradual approaches. Sometimes the will, strong in its innate and habitual ungodliness, drives back the law; at other times the law, under cover, perhaps, of some providential chastening, renews the assault, and gains a firmer footing further in. The conflict and the conquest may be the work of years—the work of a life-time; but whether by many successive stages, or by one overwhelming onset, the issue, if the work of grace go on, is, as it is recorded here, "Sin revived, and"—

3. "I died." The life in which he had hitherto trusted

was extinguished then. Convictions rose and closed round like the waves of a flowing tide, until they covered and quenched his vain hope. Bit by bit his standing-room of self-righteousness was taken away. Departments of his heart and his history, which till now he had thought good against the final judgment, were successively flooded by the advancing, avenging law. This good intention and that charitable deed—a righteous transaction there, and an exercise of repentance here—prayers, penances, and a long catalogue of miscellaneous virtues, floating down the stream of daily life, had coalesced and consolidated, as wood, hay, stubble, stones, mud, carried down by a river sometimes aggregate into an island in the estuary. The heap seemed to afford a firm footing for the fugitive in any emergence.

Upon this heap “the commandment came.” It came from God. It came with divine authority. It came with resistless power. It entered into his heart, and flowed over his whole life-course. It rose like the tide over the pieces of merit on which the man had taken his stand, and blotted them out. One by one they disappeared. He saw with dismay the whole region of honesty, and diligence, and almsgiving, and devotion, marked as sin, and given over to wrath. The law has come and covered them. Where they lay nothing now remains but a fearful looking for of judgment.

But still the commandment comes. The convict, trembling now for his life, abandons all that seems doubtful, and hastily gathering some of the very best and surest parts of his righteousness, piles them beneath his

feet. He will no longer give himself out as a saint ; he even owns that he is a sinner. He claims only to have sinned less than some whom he knows, and to have done some good things which might at least palliate the evil. The law pays no respect to this refuge of lies, and shows no pity to the fugitive. Still it comes. One great wave—"thou shalt love the Lord thy God"—dashes on, and washes down at a stroke the whole pile on which the hope of the hypocrite was built. Not a fragment of its foundation can now be seen, and the avenging law tumultuates triumphant over the place where once it stood. "With all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind ;" thus wave follows wave, until the law of God has covered all the righteousness of men, and left it lying deep in everlasting contempt.

This death of false hope is, as its name indicates, like the departure of the spirit from its house of clay. Disease having gained a footing in the frame, makes its approaches, more slowly or more rapidly, and closes upon the man. Within a narrower and narrower circuit the encroaching enemy confines the life. Member after member is overtaken and paralyzed. The soul, pressed by a greater power, abandons one by one the less defensible extremities, and seeks refuge in its own interior fastnesses. Still the adversary, holding every point that he has gained, presses on for more. To one remaining foothold the distressed occupant clings a while ; but that refuge, too, the inexorable besieger takes at last. Chased by the strange usurper from every part of its long-cherished home, the life flickers over it a moment, like

the flame of an expiring lamp, and then darts away into the unseen.

So perished the hope of the self-righteous man. He died. What, then? Then—

III. He lives in another life. No interval of time separated the two. The death that led from one life was the birth into another.

We do not read "I am dead," as the testimony of this man, at the turning-point of his spiritual history. "I died." Listen; it is the voice, not of the dead, but of the living. No articulate sound issues from a grave. The dead never tell us how they died. Here the possessor of the new life informs us how he was driven from the old. Israel, God's dear child, settled now in the promised land, weaves the events of his strange history into a song of praise. The exodus from Egypt, and the passage of the Jordan, with all that filled the interval, seem but one step now, and that the step of the ransomed heir from the house of bondage into his eternal home.

On this side, too, the death through which Paul passed at conversion, is like that death which lays a Christian's weary body in the grave to rest, and admits his spirit into the presence of the Lord. "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." When the body's strength is waning, and the emaciated members can no longer obey the will; when the breath is panting quickly, and the blood is flowing feebly, and the soul is hovering on the outmost verge of life,—another life, conterminous with this one along all its border, is

ready to receive the exile. Eternity marches everywhere with time, as the sea marches with the land. There is no intervening space. The step that takes you out of one takes you into the other. As we, on this side, wait to receive the infant at its birth, and shout for joy when a man child is born into our world,—sons of God, on the other side, near us, though unseen, will learn to observe that shaking of the dividing veil which is caused by the dying struggle of a saint, counting and calling it the symptom of a birth, and welcoming the newborn into their brighter world. While we are weeping over the dead, they, not a step distant, are rejoicing over the living. The exodus is a death or a birth, according to the side from which it is seen.

Such, also, is the death through which Paul passed at the stage of his spiritual experience which is described in the text. The fact, like the person, has two sides. If you stand on this side and look, he dies; if you stand on that side and look, he is born. It is one act. The dying is the living. The exodus from this life is the entrance into that. He does not remain one moment dead. The instant after his death, you hear him exclaiming, "I died." His own voice declaring how and when he died, is the surest evidence that he lives.

Throughout the whole of his previous history, Paul had stood on the ground, and breathed the atmosphere of his own merits. Probably, like other people, he was obliged frequently to remove from place to place in that region. Now his hope depended more on one good deed, and now more on another. Sometimes his conscience

grew uneasy, and compelled him to shift his ground; but as long as his first life lasted, every change was a change from one thing in himself to another thing in himself. Even the law, when it began to track his path, and confine his range, could not, with all its terrors, drive him wholly forth of his own righteousness. It hunted him up and down, and made him miserable in that region; but still that region was all the world to him; he would not, could not leave it.

What the law could not do, God did by sending his Son. Christ came near the tempted, tormented man,—came near, as the Lord our righteousness. Christ brought his own righteousness, divine and infinite, into contact with Paul and Paul's wretched righteousness. Christ came, and called, pleaded, wept, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." Now, the law chasing him once more, chased him over. Out of his own merits went the man that moment, and into Christ. Then he died; and from the moment of his death he lived. Henceforth you find him continually telling of his life, what it is, and where he found it. "Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me;" "Our life is hid with Christ in God."

The man whose footsteps are marked here was one of the Good Shepherd's flock. We must follow this track, if we would enter the fold. In the suddenness of the passage our experience may be different; but in the way by which he went, our experience must be the same.

This is the way,—the way of life: I am leaning on my own merits in prospect of the judgment. The law, revealing glimpses alternately of God's justice and of my

sin, drives me hither and thither within this region, seeking peace and finding none. When I am at the point of despair, beginning to perceive that my own righteousness, instead of saving, will justly condemn me, yet desperately clinging to it, because I know no other, then Christ comes near. There is no terror in his look. I see his compassion flowing. He bids me abandon my own righteousness, and put on his. Drawn on this side by Christ's love, and driven on the other side by the law's terror, I at last let all my fastenings go, and cast myself into the Saviour's outstretched arms. I leap from my own righteousness into Christ's. I pass from death unto life. "There is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Let the line be distinctly marked between what the law can, and what it cannot do. It may turn your root into rottenness, but it cannot cause a living tree to spring from the dust of the dead one. It may shake, until it shake down all the foundations of a man's first hope, but it cannot bear away the stricken victim from the ruins. It can make the unforgiven sinner more miserable, but it cannot make him more safe. It is only when Christ comes near with a better righteousness, that even the commandment, raging in the conscience, can drive you from your own. All Pharaoh's armies closing round could not have driven the helpless Hebrews forth from the confines of Egypt, if the Red Sea had not opened and offered them a passage through. We owe much to a terrible law for not permitting us to rest under the wrath to come; but more to a winning Saviour for being our refuge and drawing us

in. We owe much to that flaming justice which made the old life die, but more to that love which received the dying as he fell into life eternal.

I desire to make it plain to your understanding, and leave it deeply imprinted on your hearts, that though the law, like flaming fire and stormy winds, becomes God's messenger to run his errands of mercy, yet the saved owe their salvation all to Christ.

I awake from a swoon, alone. The fathomless sea is beneath me, the fathomless sky above me, and I am clinging convulsively to some broken bits of wood. The burning, sinking ship—the shrieking, drowning crowd,—I can scarcely be said to remember : a dim, faintly-outlined image of them hovers like mist about my troubled brain. The sky grows dark, the wind grows stormy, the waves leap higher, the little raft is rending ; I am sink—sinking in the sea alone. Will these terrors drive me from my frail resting-place ? In these extremities will I let my failing foothold go ? Yes, if I see the life-boat bearing down upon me, and feel a line thrown from her bows falling athwart my body, and hear a brother's shout above the storm, "Hold fast by this and you are safe !" The storm above, the waves around, the rending beneath me, will not drive me off my bits of broken wood, unless the life-boat is by my side. Although I know my standing to be unsafe, although I feel it going asunder, I will cling to it and perish with it, if nothing better is within my reach.

If I am saved to-day, I owe much to the law which taught me that I was lost, but more to Christ who became my Saviour.

VI.

VESSELS CHOSEN, CHARGED, AND USED IN
THE WORK OF THE LORD.

“ But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.”
—Acts ix. 15.

THE apostle Paul occupies a large place in the Bible, in the Church, in history, in heaven. No mere man, before or since, has filled so great a space in the scheme of Providence, or left his mark so wide and deep upon the world. The gospel is the greatest power that has ever operated on earth, and Paul was its greatest minister.

Considering the tendency to hero-worship, which seems inherent in our fallen nature, there was great danger lest he who stood so far above his fellows should be mistaken for a god. This danger was foreseen and averted in the election and calling of Paul. He who conceived the plan and executed it, hath done all things well. The worshippers of that saint will be put to shame when the Scriptures reveal the hole of the pit whence sovereign mercy dug their idol. The history of Saul's conversion proclaims more clearly, more loudly than an angel's voice, “ See thou do it not.”

This most learned doctor of the schools, the Pharisee who scrupulously tithed his mint, and devoutly buckled

on his broad phylacteries, was the life and soul of the infuriated gang who shed the blood of Christ's earliest martyr. The mob executioners got their signal in the glance of his cruel eye. He satiated his own sectarian pride by the murder of the good, and crowned his wickedness by offering the bloody deed as a service done to God. To make an idol of this man, when by free grace he is highly exalted and greatly used, is either impossible or inexcusable. God needed a man to signal the glad tidings so that they might be seen afar ; with this view he lifted one up from the lowest place, and set him on the highest. Thus divine mercy found free scope, and human pride was effectually excluded. Job, though free from idolatry in fact, confessed that "the moon walking in brightness" tempted him to kiss his hand in token of reverence, as if the creature were divine. But if he had known that moon at first, a mass of impurity lying on the earth and polluting it, and seen it then by God's hand lifted up, and lighted, and balanced in the sky, he would not have experienced any tendency to worship the once filthy and still feeble thing. All the homage of his heart would have risen spontaneously to the living and true God, who made that lesser light, and hung it in heaven for the use of men. It is thus that we are kept from unduly reverencing the apostle Paul, although, under the Sun of righteousness, he is the largest light of our spiritual firmament; for in our sight he was, by mere mercy, lifted from the mire of guilt, and fixed the loftiest and brightest of that cloud of witnesses who receive and reflect the "Light of the world."

We shall best explain and apply the text by examining its terms in succession, one by one.

I. A *vessel*. The term signifies the implement by which any work is done, or the dish in which anything is held. It is an instrument constructed and fitted for use in any species of operation.

All the world is the field whereon God works, and it is full of the instruments which he employs. Every flower, every leaf, every tendril is a cunningly contrived instrument, designed and fitted for carrying on some delicate process in the vegetable economy. In animals every member of the body is a tool with which the creature—with which the great Creator works. The eye, the ear, the tongue, the foot, and a thousand other exquisite instruments, hang at hand in the workshop, ready for the worker's use.

Each separate part of creation, again, is an instrument in God's hands for carrying his plans into effect. The internal fires of the globe are his instruments for heaving up the mountain ridges, and causing the intervening valleys to subside. The clouds are vessels employed in carrying water from its great reservoir in the ocean to every portion of the thirsty land. The rivers are waste-pipes for carrying back the soiled water that it may be purified for subsequent use. The sun is an instrument for lighting and warming a troop of revolving worlds, and the earth's huge bulk a curtain for screening off the sunlight at stated intervals, and so affording to weary workers a grateful night of rest. Chief of all the imple-

ments provided and employed on earth, is man—made last, made best for his Author's service; broken, disfigured, and defiled by sin, but capable of working wondrously yet, when redeemed, and restored, and employed again.

God has not cast away the best of all his instruments because it was marred and polluted. He has conceived and executed a costly plan for redeeming and renewing it. He spared not his own Son, that he might have from this fallen family a multitude of vessels full of his love—a multitude of fitting instruments employed in his service. A soul won is the best instrument for winning souls.

II. A *chosen* vessel. This man, who was raised from the ground by his companions and led blind into Damascus, is the vessel whom the Lord has sovereignly chosen, and will graciously employ.

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place." "Known unto God are all his works." Compassing him about in all his ways, God felt every throb of impotent anger that was beating in the persecutor's heart. Although the vessel was marred and occupied with evil, its Maker counted it still his own. He can employ the evil as his unconscious instruments, or make them willing in the day of his power. When he had chastised backsliding Israel by the King of Babylon, he broke the rod and threw it away. In other cases he turns the king's heart as a river of water, and then accepts the willing homage of a converted man.

It was a polished and capacious vessel that the Great King wrenched from the grasp of the arch-enemy near the gate of Damascus. One of the clearest intellects that

ever glowed in a human frame changed hands that day. Saul was a man of rare courage. He was a good soldier of the wicked one before he owned allegiance to Christ. He did what he said. The purposes which his heart devised his hand executed. "I verily thought I ought to do many things against the name of Jesus of Nazareth, which thing I also did." The vessel was capacious, and the capacious vessel was full. All the learning of the time had been poured into it. The traditions of the Jews and the philosophy of the Greeks lay and seethed together in that roomy and restless brain. Not only was his head full of notions; his heart was fired with a resolute purpose, and his arm was nerved by a dauntless will. He was Christ's chief enemy then in the world. He breathed forth threatenings and slaughter against the members of the Church, blasphemies against its living Head. God looks down from heaven on this man, not as an adversary whose assaults are formidable, but as an instrument which may be turned to another use. As clay in the hands of the potter this man lies. The vessel may be broken in anger, or employed in labours of love as the Maker wills. Arrested at the crisis of its course by a hand unseen, it is turned upside down, emptied of its accumulated filth, purged from all its dross, filled from heaven's pure treasures, and used to water the world with the word of life. Under God's eye and in God's hand, this man is not a formidable antagonist, but simply a vessel to be broken in judgment, or purified for use on earth and in heaven.

Saul of Tarsus, called to be an apostle, is a conspicuous

example of divine sovereignty. He did not first choose Christ, but Christ chose him. He was in the way of evil when the Lord met him with subduing, forgiving, renewing mercy. When human pride is at last silenced by the sense of redeeming love, it is sweet to feel and own that Jesus is at once the author and the finisher of our faith—"the beginning of the creation of God" within renewed human hearts on earth, and the ending thereof when the spirits of the just are made perfect in his presence. Christ is first and last—all in all. I recognise God's command to me, that I should turn and live; I recognise my duty to close with his offer; I recognise the justice of my condemnation if I refuse to comply. God bids me believe and live: I ought to obey; but if I obey and be saved like Paul, like him I shall say and sing, as the history of my redemption, When I was wandering helpless further and further towards death, the Good Shepherd followed and found me, turned me round and bore me back to his fold.

III. A vessel *unto me*. Two things lie in the conversion of Paul and in every conversion; the man gets an Almighty Saviour, and God gets a willing servant. The true instinct of the new creature burst forth from Paul's breast as soon as he knew his Saviour, and before he was lifted from the ground,—“Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” The answer, sent through Ananias in Damascus, after the tumult had subsided, indicated to the convert what he should be, rather than what he should do: “He is a chosen vessel unto me.” We get

a glimpse here of the two tendencies, the human and the divine. I shall do, says the disciple in the ardour of a first love; Thou shalt be, answers that wise and kind Master, who knows that the spirit in the disciple is willing, but the flesh weak. To be like Christ is the most effectual way of working for Christ. I shall bear the vessels of the Lord, volunteers the ransomed sinner, when he feels that he is not his own, but bought with a price; the reply to this offer requires a less positive, more passive, and yet greater thing; Thou shalt be the vessel of the Lord. It is a great thing that I should take up instruments and do a work for Christ in the world; but it is a greater that Christ should take me in his hand and work out his purposes with me. "A people near unto him," is an ancient appellation of the saved. Surely they are near him who are held as a vessel in his hand. This is our security alike for safety and usefulness. The star that is in his right hand is held up so that it cannot fall, and held out so that it shines afar. When he chooses a vessel he uses it; he neither keeps it idle nor casts it away.

IV. A vessel to *bear my name*. The text tells not only what he is and whose he is, but also and specifically to what uses he will be applied. He was a vessel firmly put together, and filled to overflowing, before Jesus met him in the way. At that meeting he was emptied of his miscellaneous vanities, and filled with the name of Christ. See an account of the whole process by his own pen: "If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: circumcised the eighth day, of

the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews ; as touching the law, a Pharisee ; concerning zeal, persecuting the church ; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord : for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ" (Phil. iii. 4-8). The whole stock in trade of the self-righteous Pharisee is inventoried here. Himself delights to display the filthy rags, and make a show of them openly. He appropriates the shame to himself that the glory may rise to his Lord. He recounts how these were cast out at the great change, and counted no longer gain, but loss. When these are cast out, however, he does not remain empty. No man ever yet did cast out his own self-righteousness from mere dislike of it. As the money-changers were driven from the temple only at and by the entrance of Jesus, so the false confidences maintain their ground in a human heart until they are displaced by the presence of the Lord our righteousness. All these carefully gathered, tenderly cherished stores, he now counts loss ; but it is for Christ. He counted them precious as long as he knew none other. He never proposed to sell off all that he had, or anything that he had, until he fell in with the pearl of great price. The old adage is true in fact although defective in philosophy: Nature abhors a vacuum; and in nature, whether its material or spiritual department, a vacuum is never found. Each man is full either of his own things, or of Christ's.

The name of Christ is the precious thing wherewith the vessel is charged. So full was Paul of this treasure that he determined in his ministry to know none other. Whether the apostle be considered for the moment a vessel for bearing seed, or one for bearing water, the result is the same. It is of the things of Christ that the ministering Spirit takes and gives to the disciples, that they may drop the seed into broken hearts, or offer cold water to thirsty souls. There is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved.

V. To bear my name *before Gentiles, and kings, and the people of Israel*. The name of Christ is the treasure which the vessel bears; to the Gentiles, and kings, and the people of Israel the vessel bears it. This bread of life, like the manna which fell in the wilderness, is given to be used, not to be hoarded. To be ever getting, ever giving, is the only way of keeping both the vessel and its treasure sweet. The more you give to others, the more you enjoy for your own use. The twelve had a fuller meal in that desert place after they had distributed the bread among five thousand than they would have had if they had dined alone. Christ is with his people still, to bless and multiply the portion of every cheerful giver.

Certain classes are enumerated before whom Paul should be a witness for Christ. Before, or more literally "in the face of" these, this vessel must bear that precious name. The form of the expression indicates that in this ministry self-denying courage is required. Perhaps the

series, in this respect, constitutes a climax. It is easier to speak of Christ and his salvation to the Gentiles, than to kings, and easier to speak of him to kings than to his own chosen people. Israel's enmity against the Lord's Anointed was keener than that of the surrounding nations. He came unto his own, and his own received him not; but to some, even of these, he gave power to become the sons of God. Paul himself was one of the first-fruits of the seed of Abraham, and a harvest has been gathered since. To this day, however, the nation in its main bulk remains more obstinate than the heathen in refusing to have this Man to reign over them.

In our day, too, there are various classes and characters of men who need the testimony of Jesus. Those who possess it should be prepared to bear it about in every place, and hold it forth in any company. This witness in his day was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ; would that all our Christianity were as honest and as strong! If we quail where the majority profess to be on our side, what would have become of us if our lot had been cast in the beginning of the gospel, when its disciples were obliged to confront an adverse world? May the Lord increase our faith, and increase, too, that which hangs next beneath it in Peter's golden chain of graces,—the courage to confess our Saviour before friend and foe.

But, perhaps, we should not speak of more courage being required to maintain a good confession in one place, and less in another: for with God it is as easy to keep the ocean within its bed, as to balance a dewdrop on a blade of grass; and the same principle rules in the

distribution of grace to disciples of Christ. Without it the strongest is not sufficient for anything; with it the feeblest is sufficient for all. Our martyr forefathers, who, by the peace of God ruling in their hearts, were enabled to make good confession at the stake, would, if left to themselves, have denied their Lord under the blandishments of a godless drawing-room. To the eye of sense the faithfulness of this generation is not tested by so severe a strain; but the difference lies mainly in the outward appearance. The human heart is still as deceitful, and the god of this world still as powerful, as in the days of old. In our own strength we cannot overcome the least temptation; through Christ that strengtheneth us we can conquer the greatest.

Not before Gentiles, and kings, and the people of Israel, are we summoned to bear witness for Christ; but we stand daily in a place and presence where the temptation to deny him is equally strong. A Christian young man in a great workshop, a Christian young lady in a gay and fashionable family, is either carried away like chaff before the wind, or stands fast by a modern miracle of grace.

We are so many vessels, labelled on the outside with the name of Christ; what we are really charged with may not be seen at a distance, or discovered in a day. Those, however, who stand near these vessels often or long, will by degrees find out what they contain. By its occasional overflowings, especially when it is unexpectedly and violently shaken, the secret will be revealed. Some are looking on who do not believe that the Spirit which fills us is the Spirit of Christ; and they lie in

wait for evidence to prove their opinion true. For their own sakes, let them find it false. Before them bear the name of Christ, when needful, on your lips, the Spirit of Christ in your heart, the example of Christ in your conduct.

But the word which requires that we should be witnesses unto Christ is peculiarly apt to slip from our grasp, especially when the specimen exhibited is some eminent saint. An indolent, earthly selfishness, under pretence of humility, like Satan in an angel's dress, cunningly suggests the distinction between a common ungifted man and the great apostle of the Gentiles. He was a worthy witness; but what could we do, although we did our best? If you are a sinner forgiven through the blood of Christ, in the greatest things Paul and you are equal; unequal only in the least. In the things that reach up to heaven and through eternity, there is no perceptible difference between you; the distinction is confined to the earth and time. You, a lost sinner, get pardon and eternal life in God's dear Son, and what does he get more? Getting as much from your Lord, you may love your Lord as much. In the economy of grace a shallower vessel serves nearly every purpose as well as a deeper, if both are full of Christ.

In nature, the shallowest lake, provided it be full, sends up as many clouds to heaven as the deepest, for the same sunlight beams equally on both their bosoms. This law may often be seen at work in the spiritual kingdom. "Glory to God in the highest" rises in a stream as strong and pure from a sinner saved who lays out one

talent in a lowly sphere, as from a sinner saved who yields ten talents in the sight of an applauding world. Nay, more ; as a lake within the tropics, though shallow, gives more incense to the sky than a polar ocean of unfathomable depth, so a Christian of few gifts, whose heart lies open fair and long to the Sun of righteousness, is a more effectual witness than a man of greater capacity who lies not so near, and looks not so constantly to Jesus.

For a concluding lesson specially suited to the times, let us lay aside the particular idea of a vessel, and take up again the more general idea of an instrument ; for both alike lie in the terms of the text.

In the coarser work of breaking up his own way at first, God freely uses the powers of nature and the passions of wicked men ; but for the nicer touches near the finishing, he employs more sensitive instruments. A work of righteousness is about to be done upon the person of a Greek jailer at Philippi. Mark the method of the omniscient Worker. A strong, coarse tool he seizes first, and therewith strikes the hard material, with the view of carrying it through a certain preparatory stage ; then with an instrument of more ethereal temper and keener edge, which he had previously placed within reach, he completes the process. The earthquake which shook the foundations of the prison rent the outer searing of the jailer's conscience, and made an open path into his soul. In such work the powers of nature could no further go. What an earthquake could not do, God did by a renewed human heart, and gentle, loving human lips. From the same chosen vessel that Ananias had visited at Damascus,

the ointment was poured forth which healed the jailer's wound. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," said Paul ; the rude heathen believed and lived.

Thus God works to-day both in secret individual conversions, and in wide-spread national revivals. Bankruptcies, storms, diseases, wars, are charged to batter down the defences, and then living disciples go in by the breach to convert a kingdom or win a soul. Missionaries seldom begin the work, and providences never complete it. Each kind of instrument is best in its own place and time. Do not go forward without providential openings, lest you should spend your strength for nought ; and do not neglect providential openings, lest the lost opportunity should never return.

The inanimate machinery of war, more powerful now than in any former generation, may suffice to break down the walls of the enemy's stronghold ; but these engines that pioneer so powerfully cannot capture the fortress ; loyal, living men, must enter and take possession in their sovereign's name. This order is adopted in the Christian warfare. Wherever the strife of men or the judgment of God has made an opening, good soldiers of Jesus Christ spring in and take possession for their Lord.

Thus, when war and treaties opened China, the Christian Church leapt in. Within those mysterious barriers Christ is now by his chosen instruments closing in a decisive struggle with the strong man who for ages has kept his house there in peace. By the rents which the earthquake insurrection has left in the framework of

Indian society, our missionaries may perhaps get deeper into the nation's life than heretofore. In Italy, too, while the thunder and the lightning are doing their terrible work, Christians lie on the watch, ready to enter with the still, small word as soon as the storm is spent. Already the Man of Sin has been compelled to slacken his grasp, and several provinces are free. The time seems near when chosen vessels full of Christ may bear their treasure through the broken barriers, and pour it out in Italy—pour it out in Rome, the same unchanged treasure that Paul bore long ago to the same place. A long barren night has passed over Italy, but the word of God liveth and abideth for ever. By the very fact of making openings, God is beckoning for instruments to bring it in.

But the same order prevails and the same laws rule in the minutest scale of individual life. It is not only China, or India, or Italy that is long closed against Christ, and at last opened by commotions within or assaults from without. This neighbour who has lived long without God in the world, and fenced himself all round against the inroad of serious thoughts, has been shaken as if by an earthquake. It may be the insolvency of a bank; or the death of a brother; it may be the encroachment of disease in his own frame, or the spiritual awakening of sinners near him; it may be any one of these, or of other similar shakings, that makes a breach in the defences, and leaves an opening right through into the soul. Now is the time for those finer instruments which Jesus loves to use. Vessels who bear Christ's name, bear it in at that opening now. Do not stand and say we are not great

vessels ; little vessels will go more easily in, and little vessels, full of Christ, will do the work there as well as great ones.

This is what we need—a great number of Christians with Christ in them, penetrating society in every direction like veins in the living body. If these are constantly charged, and so gently, imperceptibly pressing everywhere alike on the retaining walls, they will pour in the precious name that fills them, wherever and whenever an opening is made. The drops that trickle unseen in foot-prints obey the same law that rules the rivers and the sea. These drops yielding to that law, constitute the rivers and keep the ocean full. Every forgiven sinner is a vessel ; and by many little vessels must the work be done.

Has Christ visited you, brother, and freely taken all your sin away? It shows, you think, that you had need of the Lord ; yea, but it shows also another thing—that the Lord has need of you.

VII.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE WORLD.

“And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.”—1 Cor. vii. 31.

THE Christian life is, in many respects, an anomaly on the earth. Its principles and experiences do not all lie within the analogy of nature. It is, in a great measure, made up of apparent incongruities and contradictions. It is at once strength and weakness; riches and poverty; living and dying. This union of contraries in the experience of believers is set forth with great fulness and precision in 2 Cor. vi. 8-10.

The place of Christians is peculiar, and such also should their character be. There is a strange mixture of heaven and earth in every renewed man. If we have been made new creatures in Christ, we are by one birthright heirs of death, and by another heirs of glory. In a certain sense there are two natures in every disciple of Christ; he has been created and created again,—born and born again. He has gotten a new nature, and yet much of the old nature adheres to him still. He is in the world as the place of a temporary sojourning, but not of it in origin, aim, or end. It is no part of a Christian's duty to aim at singularity; and yet there is much of singularity about a Christian.

Last summer a youth, approaching the stature, but far

beneath the age or strength of manhood, made a tour through the picturesque scenery on the south-west coast of Ireland. In dress and manners there was nothing to distinguish him from other well-bred, well-educated young men, and at first the people took no notice of the stranger ; but as soon as it became known that he was the Queen's son, the heir of the kingdom, multitudes congregated to gaze upon him as he passed. The sons of God, the heirs of an everlasting kingdom, tread the path of life at our side. When their character, and position, and prospects are known, they become a wonder unto many. If the rank, which through the better birth-right they have attained, were more distinctly recognised, they would receive more respect from their neighbours, and pay more to themselves. Do you observe that man with bare, bald head, shining unsheltered beneath a noonday sun, as he hews a stone by the edge of the street ; and that man with sharp, pale visage, and weary, worn-out expression, poring over complicated account books, in the corner of a manufactory ; and that matron, with one infant on her knee, and another at her foot, striving, with partial success, both to keep the children cheerful, and prepare in time the toiling father's food ; and that hale young woman cheerfully doing menial work in an opulent metropolitan dwelling, consenting to leave her aged mother in a cottage a hundred miles away, that she may win both that mother's bread and her own ;—these, being born again, are of the Royal family ; these are already on the very steps of the throne ; there is but one fleeting breath, and that their own, between them and the kingdom.

How small are all the distinctions which depend upon the first birth ; how great the one which depends upon the second !

The text suggests—A proper Use of the world, An improper Abuse of it, and A specific Reason for choosing one of the two alternatives ; but it will be practically more convenient to reverse this order in the process of illustration and application, thus :—

I. The reason why we should not abuse this world .
“For the fashion of this world passeth away.”

II. The abuse of this world which the text forbids :
Not abusing it.”

III. The use of this world which the text permits and enjoins: “They that use this world.”

I. The *Reason* why we should not abuse this world : the fashion of it passes away ; literally, the scene changes. As the statement of a fact, it is obviously true ; as a reason given for adopting the prescribed course, it is certainly sufficient.

The world itself is a solid and stable thing. Its face and furnishing have already undergone great changes, and are destined yet, perhaps soon, to undergo more ; but its matter and the laws which rule it are fixed. Subject ever to the will of its eternal Maker, the world, in all its principal characteristics, is to the passing generations of men an unchanging world. To us the hills are everlasting hills. The same mountain-tops point toward the

sky to-day that seemed to touch it when we were children. The same plain stretches out from the Pyramids that the Pharaohs saw from their summits, and the same silent river is gliding past. The same sun shines now on us that arrested Adam's eye when first it opened. The world does not pass away from man ; the inhabitant is often changed ; the habitation remains the same.

But though the world remains the same, it does not remain the same world to me. The green grass looks not so lightsome when those whom I loved the most are laid beneath it. Light is sweet ; but oh, some eyes that were wont to look upon it along with me are closed now. This is not the world on which I trod so lightly when I was a child. It was a brighter, hopefuller, happier world then. Its solid substance under my feet remains, doubtless, as it was ; but the fashion of it has more than once passed away since I first knew it. In the morning of life's day, even sorrows when they came were like summer clouds,—the sun soon sparkled through again. How sweet and calm the evenings were ; how gladsome the risings after rest ! The lark rose earlier and soared higher ; but not more light its song, not more blithe its heart than mine. That fashion of the world went out, and the one that came in after it, although still bright, was burdened more with care, and oftener tinged with sadness. Again the fashion changed, and the world that was once an easy, leisurely going world, became hard and busy. Faster and faster it moved, and I moved with it, until I became giddy with the whirl. The days became shorter than they once had been ; even the years seemed

to be nearly over ere they were well begun. But at this stage, although the world moves quickly, the man keeps pace with it. At the next change of fashion the breathless runner is left behind. He cannot move fast enough, and others will not wait for him. Heavy is the foot of the pilgrim, and heavy the earth on which it treads.

But, besides those which time inexorably and uniformly brings to all, there are other changes peculiar to the experience of each. The owner of a beautiful estate on the margin of a Scottish river was conducting a visitor through the parks and groves which surrounded his scarcely finished mansion. A stormy winter had just passed away, and the glad landscape was hastily putting on its green summer garment. At a bend in the path a lofty beech-tree suddenly hove in sight, wanting one hemisphere of its once symmetrical and stately head. Half way up the straight, smooth, glossy stem, it had in its youth parted into two equal boughs. These two had grown long together, and together in parallel lines had shot far upward in the sky. Each filled its own side with branches, and both locked in a perennial embrace, constituted one goodly sphere of green, proudly waving in the wind, or sweetly glittering in the sunshine, as the changing seasons went and came. In the last winter's latest, fiercest blast, one of these twin boughs had been rent off. It had fallen to the ground and been carried all away, for no vestige of it was visible in the neighbourhood. The splintered rent, whence the storm had wrenched it, stared upon the passenger, telling all too

plainly the tale of woe; and the survivor, bare on the side where his marrow grew, seemed, notwithstanding the strength of his stem and the verdure of his branches, a stricken, widowed thing. "See," said the visitor, giving way to a sudden impulse, "see, 'the emblem of a husband standing alone in the world, after death has torn away the wife of his youth!'" Then first a stifled sigh revealed to the speaker that he had unconsciously hurt, by touching, a wound still green in his companion's side.

This is only one; you may as well try to number the sparks that fly upward, as the sorrows that lie in the lot of man. The surface of the world is all and always shifting. The moral instability of the earth, in the history of its inhabitants, is like the physical instability of the water. Humanity in the mass is "like the troubled sea when it cannot rest." That man is in a pitiable plight whose soul cleaves to the fashion of this world; for it is continually moving, and every movement rends him. The redeemed of the Lord, even in the present world, obtain a firmer footing and enjoy a brighter hope: "He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed trusting in the Lord" (Ps. cxii. 7). Well might he remain calm in the tumult of a shaking world, whose treasure lay safe beyond it. But, woe's me for the multitude who have invested their all in this falling stock! How many living victims are kept in continual torture, where the Inquisition is known only as a dark shadow of the past! Clinging to wealth, when wealth is taking wings to fly away; clinging to the trappings of beauty, when the

beauty which they once adorned has gone; clinging to the gaiety of youth, when age, unwelcome, unconfessed, is stealing quietly, quickly on;—they not only fail to taste the sweets which lie in all the successive conditions of life, but feel in each a sting. Forewarned, forearmed. If you allow your heart-strings to twine around the fashion of the world, so that you and it are substantially one, you are torn and tortured every day you live; for the fashion of the world is moving past you, as surely, as constantly, as resistlessly, as the diurnal revolution of this material globe. The only possible method of living either pleasantly or safely on a shifting scene is to sit loosely on its surface. If your heart be in heaven, and the weight of your hope habitually leaning there, the world cannot hurt you although it should slip from beneath your feet.

II. The abuse of this world which the text forbids. There is no danger of mistake here as to the meaning of words. The easiest interpretation of the terms is, in this case, also the best. "The world" which should be used and not abused, is this earth, with all that the Creator has spread around it or stored within it for the benefit of man.

When the gifts are turned aside from their wise and kind intent, the Giver takes it ill. A specific complaint on this subject is addressed to Israel through the prophet Ezekiel (xvi. 19): "My meat also which I gave thee, fine flour, and oil, and honey, wherewith I fed thee, thou hast even set it before them [idols] for a sweet savour." The Christian Church at this day lies as open to that

tender rebuke. Our Father's bounties are wasted on miscellaneous idols.

The abuses of the world cannot be all named and numbered. They seem to be as many and as various as the species of plants that grow in the ground, or of insects that creep on its surface. Let two or three of them, taken at random as specimens, pass in review before us.

Day and night are precious constituents of "this world," as a provision made by God for the good of men. To shuffle them out of their places is to abuse them. An assembly of dancing men and women in a heated hall, a merchant leaning over his ledger in the counting-house, a student before his lamp in the silent chamber, are all guilty of abusing the world, if they occupy the long dark night, each with his own species of exertion, and sleep on the morrow while the sun is running his race rejoicing. Necessity or mercy, in cases suddenly emerging, consecrates occasional night work, as it consecrates occasional work on the Sabbath day; but by choice to spend the night in work and the day in rest, is an act of rebellion against the King of kings, whether the worker be pursuing pleasure, or gain, or knowledge. It is an aggravated case of breach of trust. It is to accuse the Creator of a blunder in alternately drawing a curtain round the world for rest, and hanging the sun in heaven for light to the labourers. The wild birds among the branches keep the Creator's law, and enjoy the reward of obedience in better health and livelier spirits. At night-fall they lay their heads beneath their wings, and are ready to meet the dawning day with songs.

The fruitful earth is systematically and to a great extent compelled to minister to the vice of men. By human art the juices of the ground are converted into tobacco, opium, and distilled spirits. These products, in their main bulk, are consumed in kindling an abnormal appetite, and then supplying the demand. The earth's own children, by a perverse ingenuity, contrive to draw poison from their mother's breast.

Tobacco wastes the juices of both the earth and man. It "scourges" the soil on which it grows, and the living body that absorbs its virus. The nations of the Continent have outrun us in this indulgence, but we seem to be following fast in their steps. Wasting money which might be better employed, and generally damaging, more or less, the mind and body of the consumer, it is in itself an evil, and often paves the way to worse. A converted man, whose bodily ear this notice cannot now reach, told me that, having been addicted in the days of his ignorance to drinking and smoking, and having from the day of his spiritual enlightenment totally abandoned both, he found the appetite for whisky destroyed at the end of three days, while the appetite for tobacco subjected him to an agony of three months. Should any man whom God's Son has made free willingly article himself for life to such a tyrant? But I hear one saying: "A matter so small ought not to have place in a sermon." There are smaller things than this in the Bible, and He who made it knows what it should contain. Nothing would please the adversary better than that in religious teaching we should confine our view to great affairs, and shut out from

our regard the thousands of little things whereof, mainly, human life consists. "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." That divine maxim, faithfully applied, would make short work of the expensive, useless, filthy practice, as far as the true disciples of Christ are concerned.

I have been informed by those who have visited the poppy fields of India, that nothing in nature can be lovelier to look upon. The best land, in the most sheltered situation, is appropriated to the cultivation of the plant. Glowing in the brightest colours beneath a vertical sun, it attracts and enchants the traveller. Obedient earth and sky surrender their power and beauty to the skill of men. But ah! beneath the petals of that gay flower a seed is swelling, which, through demoniac art, germinates into one of the heaviest curses of our kind. Having, by aid of public capital, drawn the poison from the soil of India, we induce the Chinese, partly by our superior power, and partly by their own baser passions, to take it off our hands. The whole system is "earthly, sensual, devilish." How long, O Lord, holy and true, wilt thou permit this nation to possess a land which it perverts!

Opium is a most precious medicine. Many sufferers have blessed God for it as the means of alleviating pain which could not be removed. This use of it is freely permitted, as the trees of the garden were placed at the disposal of primeval man; but when we, discontented with life as God has appointed it for us in the body, presume to change its conditions by stimulants applied to the brain, we seem to repeat, in its spirit, the first sin, profanely

grasping a forbidden kind of life, and reaping death as our reward.

At home, too, in a similar way, we abuse the world, by converting a large portion of the grain which it brings forth for the food of man, into a stimulant which is chiefly employed in ministering to his vices.

Civilized nations have long abused in the gross a whole continent of the world. Africa is a part of God's earth. It is designed and fitted for use. It has in many parts a bright climate, a fertile soil, and a profuse vegetation. It possesses great interior lakes, and broad, ever-flowing rivers. The constitution of its inhabitants accords with their circumstances. Instead of buying from the people the products of the soil, so stimulating arts and industry, we bought the people—the weak from the strong,—so stimulating war and rapine. A grand principle of the divine government is expressed in these words of Jesus, “The poor ye have always with you.” The poor are left with us for use. The use is two-fold: to test whether there be true brotherly love in us, and to supply it with a field for exercise if it do exist. A continent destitute of the gospel and civilization is left lying alongside of a continent which possesses both. From heaven the Righteous Governor looks down to see how the rich will treat the poor. Alas for the result! Africa lies uncultivated, and Africans are enslaved! “These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes” (Ps. l. 21).

But in actual experience the abuse of the world runs down

into the minutest transactions of individual life. He abuses the world who, by playing deep stakes in some of the dangerous lotteries of life, loses the lordly estate which he inherited from his forefathers ; and he who spends at night on stimulants the half-crown which his hard hands have won by the labour of a day, leaving his children naked and hungry in their miserable home. Nor is the sin confined to cases of positive and clearly-marked prodigality. We need to have the motto, "Waste not, want not," inscribed on the walls, both of territorial magnates and prosperous citizens ; and it should be inscribed both up stairs and down. To consume more than we need and use, whether it be done by rich or poor, whether it be done in food or clothing, is to abuse the world which God has kindly framed and fitted for the use of men.

III. The use of this world which the text permits and enjoins : "They that use the world." The text suggests not an exercise on spiritual subjects, but the common life of a spiritual man. It tells not how those who possess only the present world may obtain the right to a better, but how those should employ the present who already possess the right to a better world.

Observe how God uses this world, that we may fall in with his purpose, and yield ourselves as instruments in working out his plan.

In some portions of space stars are so thickly strewn, that to the naked eye, or with ordinary telescopes, they seem little white clouds upon the sky ; and it is only when instruments of greater power are applied that they

are discovered to be a multitude of separate worlds. Thousands of these orbs so situated as to be taken in at one view, appear like shreds of mist lying deeper in heaven than those which wreath the mountain tops. All these worlds together are "a cloud of witnesses" unto God, and our world is one of them.

For this one he has provided a nobler use than for any, for all others. He has made it the dwelling-place of creatures formed after his own image, and capable of communion with himself; but the grandest use of the habitation was made after the inhabitant fell by sin. Leaving behind all the shining worlds which pass and repass each other in the heavens, like ships upon the sea, the Redeemer fixed his eye, his foot on this. Here the Son of God lived, and suffered, and rose from the dead. Here the price of redemption was paid; here the sons and daughters of the Lord obtain their birthright; here the heirs are prepared for their inheritance. Such are the purposes for which the Father employs this world; and for these chiefly the dear child values it. If we do not thus use it, all its other uses will be to us in vain. "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his soul?" When from the verge of life you look back on the place of your sojourn these many years, if that dwelling-place has not been your birth-place it will seem your grave. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

This earth shines only in the sun-light: if it were dark it would be also barren. So, morally for man, the world in which we live owes its beauty and its worth to

the light which reaches it from heaven. If there were no work of redemption, and no word of God to make it known, this would be only a kind of brutes' world where people would eat, and drink, and die. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance;" when we have obtained the chief use of this world, ten thousand other uses spring up within our reach, and we may safely enjoy them all.

Christians both *may* and *must* use the world. In connection with it there is a privilege to be enjoyed, and a duty to be performed.

1. They *may* use it. Practical religion does not consist in denying ourselves the use of temporal good, or in tasting it with terror. Every creature of God is good, and should be received, not rejected. It is one mark of Antichrist, that he commands men to abstain from meats which God has provided for their use. When we become new creatures in Christ we are not thereby debarred from the fulness of the earth and sea; then we possess them by a better title, and therefore enjoy them more. A Christian, with a clear mind and a good conscience, tastes more sweetness in this world than he who has no other portion. Given: two men who have each a loaf of equal quality and size to-day, while the one has nothing more, and the other has a fortune behind it; should he enjoy less to-day this day's provision who has exhaustless stores to fall back upon when it is done? He enjoys it more. Peace of conscience sweetens daily bread.

The relations of the family, for example, are touched

in the context. These constitute some of the most precious uses of this world. He who has in the regeneration entered the family of God, has not thereby forfeited his place or his rights in the families of men. He who rains manna round our tents in the wilderness is not displeased when we gather and eat our fill. It is a poor compliment to a father's heart to imagine that the child will propitiate his favour by refusing to take the benefit of his gifts. Fathers of our flesh would not thank us for our slavish dread; beware of attributing such a mind to our Father in heaven. "The Lord," we know, "loveth a cheerful giver;" but there is another thing which he loves as well, although, perhaps, he finds as seldom, and that is, a cheerful receiver. Make one thing sure, that it is the *use* of the world, not the *abuse* of it; and then use it with a will. The rule is not, that godless people enjoy the world, and Christians wait for their portion in another. Christians, although they have their portion in another,—because they have their portion in another, taste with less alloy the sweets of every comfort which God has mingled in their present lot.

2. They *must* use it. Don't permit the riches, for example, to lie so long still that they shall rust. The rust will hurt your flesh at the time, and witness against you in the judgment. Such is the rule for all the talents. Riches are not the only species of possession which is liable to rust for want of exercise. Whatever God may have given you of personal qualification, or social position, or material means, take the use of it yourself, and let your neighbours participate in the benefit.

As money is the medium of exchange for all the commodities which men reckon valuable, it is commonly and not inconveniently allowed to represent the "world" in the sense of our text. Too many of those who, in this sense, possess the world, decline to use it. They toil to gather and keep it, that others may use it after they are dead. We do not know whether those who may come after us will be wise men or fools. Perhaps they may misappropriate the wealth which we have collected with so much care. It is a safe maxim to employ it as it comes on good objects, lest after lying long idle it should be dissipated by others on objects that are evil. It is more blessed to give than to bequeath.

But in vain do you tell a human being that the fashion of this world passeth away, if you have nothing more to tell. A drowning man will grasp straws; and you cannot put an end to the useless effort by standing on the river's brink and proving that straws will not avail to make his body buoyant. Notwithstanding your demonstration he will grasp them still. How shall we persuade him to let them go? Heave him a life-buoy, and no persuasion will be necessary. When he feels the contact of the better preserver, he will throw away the worse.

If you knew certainly that this solid earth would melt to-morrow, and become a sinking sea, it would be in vain that you should go forth to these teeming streets and warn the wretched multitude not to lean their weight upon the world. They have nothing else to lean upon. So, no demonstration of the world's changefulness will keep a human soul from cleaving to its dust. Nothing

but faith's possession of the better portion can wean our hearts from the worse. As there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, so there is now no cause for fear. The fashion of the world does not sustain them while it remaineth, and therefore does not disturb them when it passeth away.

VIII.

ALL THINGS ARE YOURS, WHEN YOU ARE
CHRIST'S.

“ All things are yours ; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours ; and ye are Christ's ; and Christ is God's.”—1 Cor. iii. 21-23.

A GREAT gulf is fixed between God and man. Sin is the separator. The fallen fall farther and faster by a law, as a planet world would fall away from the sun, if the unseen bond should burst that heretofore had held it.

Revelation rends the covering veil, and lo ! a chain depending from the throne of God stretches across the void, and holds up the dislocated world. Its links are few ; but its structure is beautiful, its material precious, its power divine. Come and see this golden chain of mercy that hangs from heaven, and touches the earth at our feet. The sight should make us glad,—more glad than Noah was when he beheld the bow of promise leaning on the bosom of the black thunder-cloud that seemed to threaten another flood.

The exultant apostle begins with that which lies next himself, and traces all good, possessed or expected by men, upward through the well-ordered covenant to the sovereign gift of God. He begins with the lowest step, and climbs upward to the source of all. It will suit our purpose better to begin where he leaves off. When by

the Spirit, witnessing through Paul, we have been lifted up to the great white throne in the heavens where mercy has her dwelling-place, we shall take our departure thence, and follow the course of mercy's outgoings toward the children of men. The text leads us direct to the upper spring that we may learn how love is let down upon a lost world.

I. The highest link : "Christ is God's."

II. The next under it : "Ye are Christ's."

III. The lowest : "All things are yours."

I. *Christ is God's.* This is the greatest outgoing of infinite love.

The Creator rejoices in all his works, but he has a special and peculiar interest in man. When the work of creation, as to its bulk, was nearly done,—when light had chased away the darkness, and order succeeded confusion,—when the sun and stars shone down from heaven, and flowers answered them from earth, with lesser light but equal loveliness,—when living beings were moving in earth, and sea, and air, each residing in its own element, and acting according to its kind,—creation was not yet complete—the Creator was not yet satisfied. The sixth and last day was nearly done, and yet in the eye of the omniscient Contriver there was a blank between himself and his work which made it all dull and unprofitable. Every creature was very good of its kind, but as yet no part of the great organized material world could go into communion with its maker, God. The created world

possessed no member of sufficient sensitiveness to feel its Creator's hand; and the Creator found no point of sympathetic contact between himself, a spirit, and the material world which he had made. Creation had no head yet to know God, no heart to love him; and God desires to be known and loved.

Then was held that council in which humanity was planned. "Let us make man in our own image." Accordingly, in the image of God created he man. Allied to God by an intelligent mind and an immortal spirit, yet wedded to matter by the body in which he dwells, man was added to the upper edge of creation on creation's latest day, a link of communion between the Maker and his work. The world is now complete. In its whole and in its parts, "behold it is very good."

As afterwards among the inferior creatures no help meet was found for man, so at the first no help meet was found among them for God. In both cases a new creation was required to meet and satisfy the want. God at first, and afterwards man, needed a creature dependent and receptive, destitute of power, but capable of communion. There is some analogy between these two companionships. The man is the head of the woman; Christ is the head of the man; God is the head of Christ (1 Cor. xi. 3). The analogy we could not have ventured to suggest, but finding it suggested in Scripture, we can, partially at least, appreciate its truth. It is partly visible to us, but, like an iceberg floating in the ocean, the greater portion of it lies below in depths unseen.

The mystery of the fall came on. Satan assaulted with success the only vulnerable point in all God's material creation. The very excellence of man's nature rendered possible man's fall. It was necessary that the spirit destined to commune with God should be created free. At this opening it was possible for sin to enter; at this opening entered sin. The connecting link was broken. The glad thanksgiving of a world could no longer rise like sweet incense to the eternal Father; the love of the eternal Father could no longer thrill down through all that he had made. God on high was robbed of his creatures' homage; the world in all its width was shut out from its Maker's smile, and left to wither.

But though Satan was thus successful, he was not permitted to triumph. A stronger than he will destroy his works. But how? Will the Almighty reduce to nothing the world that sin has defiled, and call another into being by his word? No; for reasons perfectly known to himself, and partially patent even to our understanding, he determined not to destroy the damaged and create anew, but to redeem the lost, revive the dead, beautify the corrupted. To save, not to destroy, is the purpose of the Most High.

But how? When the creature called into being as a son has become an alien,—when the child, loathsome by spiritual death, can no longer be allowed to lie in the Father's bosom,—where shall God now find a MAN, holy as himself, to be his companion, and reciprocate his love? Here is the mystery revealed: *Christ is God's*. "Behold the *man*!" He dwells in the bosom of the Father, and

yet is bound in brotherhood to the human family. This is the plan of redemption. This is the way of God back to the fallen, of the fallen back to God. God manifested in the flesh, the man Christ Jesus, is the one mediator. The Father cometh to no man; no man cometh to the Father but by him.

Satan did not triumph. The blow took effect, indeed; but the wound was curable. It did not overreach the Omniscient. In spite of it God found a holy Man through whom he might hold communion with his world,—a Man high enough to be his own fellow, and yet lowly enough to be a born brother of the lost in their adversity.

“Behold my servant whom I uphold; mine elect in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa. xlii. 1). “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. iii. 17). Unspeakable, inconceivable is the satisfaction of the Father in Christ as the substitute and advocate of men. The Father’s delight in the Son incarnate is the uppermost link of the chain whereon all our hope for eternity hangs. How strong and sure it is! Who can break it through? Who can burst in between God and God’s dear Son, our Saviour? Satan tried in the wilderness to separate between this Man and God, as in the garden he had separated between the first man and God. The Tempted triumphed, and the tempter fled. “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me.” “I and the Father are one.” “Christ is God’s.”

By the look of that holy Man the devils were driven away like chaff before the wind; “What have we to do with thee, thou Jesus?” It is impossible that the

Father should hate holiness ; it is impossible that the Son should do sin. By these two impossible things is made sure as the very being of God that first and greatest link in the chain of man's redemption—" *Christ is God's.*"

II. *Ye are Christ's.* Observe, Christians, the intimation is not that Christ is yours. That is a truth, and a truth of inexpressible preciousness, but another and different thing is revealed here. It is not that He is your portion, but that ye are his,—not that ye have gotten Christ, but that Christ has gotten you.

In actual experience both the union and the delight in it are mutual : "My beloved is mine, and I am his." The vine holds the branch, and the branch holds the vine. These two are one attachment. The mother clings to her child, and the child, when danger threatens, clings to his mother. If the child were dead, the corpse would no longer clasp the mother ; but neither would the mother continue to clasp the corpse. These two graspings stand or fall together. You must have both or neither. Such is the relation between Christ the Redeemer and Christians the redeemed.

A disciple's present enjoyment may indeed correspond to the energy of the hold which he takes of Christ ; but his real safety depends on the might and constancy of the hold which Christ takes and keeps of him. "My beloved is mine,"—there lies my present happiness ; but "I am his,"—there lies my everlasting safety. A very slight breath of temptation may break asunder your love to Christ ; but all the powers of darkness cannot overcome

his love to you. Who shall separate? The heroic Paul sent forth the challenge to all the principalities and powers of creation. He boldly bade defiance to tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword; to death and life; to angels, principalities, and powers; to things present and things to come; to height and depth, and every other creature;—let them all lay on their utmost strain, he did not fear it. But the ground of this man's confidence all the while lay in the constancy, not of himself, but of his Saviour. The bond which he felt compassing him about,—which he knew would hold him to the end,—was “the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. viii. 39). This all-enduring, almighty love has its dwelling “in Christ Jesus.”

A British subject may be safe although surrounded by enemies in a distant land,—not that he has strength to contend alone against armed thousands, but because he is a subject of our queen. A despot on his throne, a horde of savages in their desert, have permitted a helpless traveller to pass unharmed, like a lamb among lions,—although, like lions looking on a lamb, they thirsted for his blood,—because they knew his sovereign's watchfulness, and feared his sovereign's power. The feeble stranger has a charmed life in the midst of his enemies, because a royal arm unseen encompasses him as with a shield. The power thus wielded by an earthly throne may suggest and symbolize the perfect protection of Omnipotence. A British subject's confidence in his queen may rebuke the feeble faith of a Christian “O thou of

little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" What though there be fears within and fightings without, He who bought his people with his own blood cannot want his inheritance, and will not permit any enemy to wrest from his hand the satisfaction of his soul. The man, with a deceitful heart and a darkened mind, a feeble frame and a slippery way, a fainting heart and a daring foe,—the man would stumble and fall; but the member of Christ's body cannot drop off,—the portion of the Redeemer cannot be wrenched from his grasp. "Ye are his;" Christ is the safety of a Christian.

Redemption has two sides, an upper and a lower, both glorious; but the upper side hath a glory that excelleth. The sinner gets a Saviour; that is a precious truth, but it is the lower side of salvation,—the side most readily seen from our stand-point on the earth. The Saviour gets a portion to satisfy his soul, a people to rejoice in and to rejoice with, for ever; this is the upper side of the same salvation, as seen from heaven, and shining in the light of God.

It is not easy for us in the body to get a glimpse of our own redemption on its higher and heavenward side. That aspect of it, on which its Author's eyes are ever set, is too lofty for our position, too bright for our vision. So accustomed are we, even in our more earnest moments, to the nearer aspect and more subdued light of the lower side, that we abide babes, unskilful in the deeper departments of the word of righteousness. "What must I do to be saved?" comes readier to the lip of an anxious inquirer, than "What delight has Jesus in saving me?"

To think of ourselves as the portion wherein the Lord delights, is certainly consistent with thorough humility; but pride lies; or seems to lie, so nearly in the same line, that we are afraid to aim so high lest we should miss the mark and diverge into presumptuous sin. To realize the joy with which my Redeemer rejoices over me, as his portion, and yet to know how vile I am, is difficult, and seems dangerous. He must have been a skilful archer who dared to point his arrow at an apple on his own child's naked head. A man with a fainting heart and a faltering hand would abandon the chance of securing a great gain, rather than run the risk of incurring so great a loss.

If our humility were very deep, we could afford to let our faith and hope soar very high. In the experience of a much-exercised saint in the olden time, so far from humility being incongruous with an exulting sense of being the valued possession of a redeeming Lord, the height of the soul's upward rebounding was ever in proportion to the lowness of its bowing down. See his fall and his rising again; "so foolish was I, and ignorant; I was as a beast before thee; nevertheless I am continually with thee; thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me into glory" (Ps. lxxiii. 22-24).

"Ye are Christ's,"—his property and possession. Think of this in two aspects: 1st, How he obtains his property; and, 2d, How he will use it.

1. *How he obtains his property*; how it becomes his.

(1.) By the sovereign gift of God. "As many as thou

hast given him." "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me," (John xvii.) The salvation of a Christian is no shallow thing that may be shuffled off in the shaking of the earth and the heavens when they shall pass away at their Maker's presence. The root of the matter is not spread over the surface, striking only into the thin six thousand year layer of Time. It springs in the eternal purpose of the eternal God. It grows in the depths of his everlasting love. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." That work within your heart, which, at a certain period of your pilgrimage, convinced you of sin, and drew you to Jesus, was not the first step of a process. Conversion is the issue of a precious thought towards man, which springs in an unfathomable deep. In pursuance of his own purpose, when the set time was come, he laid the bands of love upon your heart, that he might do all his pleasure and possess all his own. Fear not, Christian; deep down beyond the reach of devils, beyond the search of angels,—deep in the love of God, in God who is love, springs and grows your eternal life. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, mind hath not conceived where it takes its rise. Temptations may shake its protruding branches, but cannot blight its sustaining root.

(2.) By the price of his own blood. Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price. The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. Had Christ not paid the price, they would have remained under the wrath of God, and in the power of sin. The deliverance which he gives them free he dearly bought. He gave himself, the

just for the unjust. He took their place before God's justice, that they might have his place in God's complacent love. They are his—body and soul, time and eternity, understanding, will, and affections—all and only his. "Ye are not your own," is the very key-note of a Christian's life.

(3.) By the renewing of the Holy Spirit. They are new creatures in Christ. Those who were withered branches ripe for the burning have been let into the true vine, and have gotten there "newness of life." "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins." The man has been born again; he "sees the kingdom of God" in grace now, and shall enter it soon.

There is a correspondence between the sovereign gift of God on the one side, and the man's willing self-surrender on the other. If you are Christ's, you have been given to him; but there are two givings,—“on either side one, and Jesus in the midst.” There is a giving in heaven and a giving on earth. God the Father gives you to Christ, and you give yourselves. These two fit into each other; they never clash. When an ill-balanced mind stumbles at the decrees of God, and slackens effort, under a leaden dread that effort may be vain, the difficulty lies not in the province of religion. It is a philosophy, falsely so called, intruding into a domain not its own. It has no business here. Cast it out with, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Repent and believe the gospel. Turn and live. There is the command of God; there is the duty of men? To leave that work undone, until we shall by searching find out the secret things of God, is

presumptuous disobedience. God is not wont to arrange the relations of his worlds so that the higher of two correlatives shall clash against the lower, to the destruction of both. How nicely, in nature, marrow fits into its marrow; and will God's eternal counsel jar against God's Spirit working repentance in a human heart? Stand on the seashore, and mark the rising tide. How laborious, and steadfast and patient, is its struggle upward and onward! Falling back every moment, every moment it returns to the charge with another and heavier stroke. Gaining this moment a little more than it lost the last, it encroaches slowly, surely on the beach. A planet high in heaven, satellite in waiting on our earth, is meantime gliding noiselessly along its spiral course through space. The struggles of this rising weltering tide, and the course of that silent silver moon, exactly correspond. They never jar. So correspond the covenant purpose of God and those workings in a human soul that culminate in conversion to Christ. As the sea heaves and labours, throwing up its unnumbered waves, and pressing on till it reaches the limits of its tidal rising, so a human soul, agonizing for deliverance, puts forth all its energies, according to the laws of its own nature, heaving hither and thither among hopes and fears manifold and changeful as the waves of ocean, in the act of turning from sin and cleaving to Jesus.

Ye are his, beloved, by two givings: The Father gives you, and you give yourselves to Christ; and Christ receives you, and you are his. If you be not Christ's by your own willing surrender, you will never be his, apart from

your own will, by divine decree. On high is Almighty power,—below, a willing people; and the blessed result is, ye,—disciples, coming like the dew of the morning, great in number and pure in heart,—“ye are Christ's!”

2. *How he will use his property.*

(1.) He will use his own as objects to exercise his kindness on. The good delight in doing good. The merciful love to have the needy within their reach. It is more blessed to give than to receive. That became the word of the Lord Jesus, because it was the experience of his heart. You make a benevolent man unhappy, if you remove the objects, or obstruct the channels of his compassion. The disciple who leaned closest on the breast of Jesus speaks most about little children, and about love. These two words make up a great part of John's epistles. He took on this tendency from his Lord. Jesus always took delight in the poor, because to satisfy their wants gratified the appetite of his nature. We lose nothing by his ascent to heaven. He is the same, and acts in the same manner still. His own,—little children, he counts and calls them,—his own he uses for his own pleasure, as objects to exercise his tenderness upon.

You may have seen the countenance of a mother, who loves with a mother's love all her children always, suddenly kindling into a more radiant sunshine when the infant came in sight. You may have observed that the elder children of the family in no wise resent, but rather imitate the mother's peculiar fondness for the little one. As the infant in a human household are ye, disciples, among the possessions of Christ. All the angels

of God worship him; but these angels "excel in strength," and need not so tender—so mother-like a love. The spirits of the just made perfect own him their Saviour; but they own him in triumphant songs for victory already won. Disciples in the body are the little children of his house, affording him more delight, because drawn from his goodness larger gifts. Christ, in giving grace to his people, is getting delight for himself.

(2.) He will use his own as servants to do his work. He has a work to be done in the world, and needs workers. He desires your service, and deserves it. To work willingly is a mark of a true disciple. "Who art thou, Lord?" is the first question of a convicted, down-stricken man; but when he has gotten an answer in peace to his first question, a second which is like unto it in truth and earnestness, rises as it were instinctively to his lips, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" The servant, like the master, goeth about doing good. He makes haste to work, for the rest that remaineth may soon appear, and then the opportunity of working will be over.

(3.) He will use his own as living epistles in which the world may read the riches of his grace. When in the concourse of nations proclamation is made, "Come, buy wine and milk," the strangers and foreigners, besides hearing what Christians say, desire to see what Christianity is. The short way of satisfying this demand is to show them a Christian. In this merchandise, as in others, we must sell by samples. If we have no samples to show, we need not expect buyers to offer. In point of fact,

missionaries tell us that, instrumentally, it is to the life which they are enabled to lead in the heathen's sight that the decisive success is ultimately due. Ignorant idolaters cannot read and learn Christ from smaller letters than those which a living epistle displays. The characters of Christ's kingdom must be deeply relieved in the life of its subjects, that the blind who will not see, may be compelled to feel the contact of saving truth. Who is sufficient for this thing? Our sufficiency is of God. "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me," (Acts i.)

(4.) He will use his own for company at his coming, and for portion evermore. These aspirations, you may think, are too high; you cannot attain to them. You are afraid of extravagance, and think that a humbler flight will better befit your powers. Great saints may possibly reach these transcendental exercises, but you will be content with a meaner place. This is an evil spirit striving to wrap an angel's garment round its loathsome form. Men would be able to reach a higher standard of hope if they were willing to adopt a higher standard of holiness. Real trust in Christ has, for its other side, real separation from sin. These two rise and fall together by a law, like water in the two upright ends of a bent tube. "Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." He who will not purify himself cannot afford to let his hope in Christ rise high. Into the bosom of Jesus, spiritually now, or bodily in heaven, nothing shall enter that defileth. He who clings to mammon fights shy of God.

See the operation of this law in some notable examples of Scripture. Felix had a good deal of religion, but it was not of the bright, hopeful, confiding kind ; and there was a reason for the fact. His religion made him tremble at the prospect of judgment, yet it permitted him to prostitute justice for a bribe, and to persecute the innocent for popularity, (Acts xxiv.) The lowness on this side caused the lowness on that side, by the laws of nature. Had he been willing, on the one hand, to cast off the dead weight of his lusts, his spirit, on the other hand, might have risen buoyant above the terrors of the Lord, and reached to rest in the light of his countenance. Again, the religion of the Philippian jailer was like that of Felix in its first stage, but thereafter it reached simultaneously a higher point of hope and a higher point of holiness. He believed to the saving of his soul, and forthwith washed the apostles' feet. Faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, rose together, and at an equal rate, in that tamed, renewed heart. Once more, the same law may be seen in the experience of Paul himself. In him the bud of hope burst into the bloom of triumph before the time. He counted confidently on a crown of glory, and that to be set upon his head soon by the own hand of the righteous Judge. Such and so high was the great apostle's trust ; the other side of this man, accordingly,—the side of suffering, and doing, and separating from sin,—rose in unison to an equal height. As his heart was more hopeful than others, his hand was more diligent in serving God and saving men.

Here is one of the laws of the kingdom : He who

takes little from Christ, will do little for Christ. The higher that hope rises in your soul, if it come in the channel of the covenant, the faster will obedience flow in your life. "Ye are Christ's!" Is it so? Then, if but a little vein should give way within, or that busy heart should cease its beating, the next moment you would be with Christ upon his throne. Those who cherish such a hope cannot live for the world; those who live for the world dare not cherish such a hope.

III. "*All things are yours.*" Here is a right royal promise. The shout of a king is in the camp of Christians. All the fulness of the Godhead bodily has been treasured up in Christ, expressly that it may be within the reach of his people. Although the chief term is absolutely universal, we are not left to our own imagination for the details of the inventory. A brief and comprehensive list is furnished to our hand: "Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world," &c.

1. The ministry. While the grant, as suits the dignity of the Almighty Giver, is absolutely universal, it is evident that one particular article in the dowry of the bride bulked above others, at that time, in the narrator's mind, and burst out full-bodied in his letter—the ministry as the gift of the risen Head, and the heritage of his chosen people. Not the greatest of Christ's gifts, in their own intrinsic value, but appearing the largest at the moment, as occupying the foreground of the view, foremost in the list of possessions belonging to the King's children, come Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, ministers

through whom they had believed. The variety of the provision, as well as its inherent worth, reveals the heart and hand of a Father. The full-bodied doctrinal teaching of Paul, the melting and arousing eloquence of the less profound Apollos, and the abrupt, fiery energy of Peter,—all are gladly recognised as a wisely mingled provision from the hand of that Father in heaven, who paints the rose and the violet of different hues but equal loveliness. Blessed are they that hunger. One of their blessings is, that the discriminating instincts of their new nature silently repudiate the ministry which, under any disguise, offers them a stone, and taste the sweetness of the living bread, whether ten talents be invested in breaking it, or only one.

But, besides the bounty of the Giver, the liberty of the receivers also is sealed and signalized in this text. Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas are yours,—not ye theirs. Here is one of the marks which distinguish Christ from Antichrist, and one of the reasons why the Romish priesthood conceal from the people the word of God. In Rome the ministers have the people; here, the people have the ministers. Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. The Bible is the charter of freedom alike to the nations and to the Church. While it demands absolute submission to Christ, it does not compel—it does not permit a Christian to receive his law from any other master. Let us use it, and not abuse it, lest in judgment it be taken away. The ministry is an article in the inventory of a Christian's goods. Ministers are vessels, chosen and prepared for containing the bread of life, and

distributing it among the children of the kingdom. They are the Lord's gifts to the heirs, not lords over the heritage.

Here the list suddenly leaps into larger dimensions.

2. "The world." The world on a Christian's side! We thought it was one of his chief foes. So it is. There is no contradiction here, and no confusion. The world, under direction of its god, wars against the soul. But our Father in heaven holds that enemy in the hollow of his hand, and compels it, in his own time and way, to serve his sons. The world is a birthplace for the new creature, and an exercise ground for invigorating the spiritual life. The very fires of temptation which the wicked one kindles to destroy the heirs, are employed by the love and power of the Spirit to heat the furnace in which their dross is purged away, that they may be meet for the inheritance. Mark the world as the property of the King's sons.

3. "Life." This life is precious in many ways to a Christian. When it is redeemed from vanity, he enjoys it much for itself, and more for its relation to another. If he had nothing more, it would be, indeed, a poor portion. It would be like the root of a tree under ground, where there is no tree. The fibres in the earth might have some sensations of life for a time, but they would soon rot away into kindred dust. Yet the root under ground is most precious where it is the root of a towering, fruitful tree. Such is life here in the body since sin has come into the world. It is low and mean if it has nothing above and beyond itself; but to the new creature

in Christ it is the root on which an eternal life grows. The life that began under the ground in darkness shall rear its head into the heavens, and bear its fruit in the presence of God. The natural life is indeed corrupt, but over its corrupt root the new nature is engrafted, and so this lower earthly life becomes the root of a spiritual life in heaven. Life in the body possesses an unspeakable worth to the man who, being in Christ, lives anew, and lives for ever. Life in the root under ground is most precious, if out of it and over it, through the renewing of the Spirit, rise the life of grace, and the life in glory.

4. "Death." It seems to be a difficult lesson even for true disciples to learn, that death is on their side. The understanding may, indeed, soon be convinced, but no decision of the judgment can quell the heart's antipathy to that dread messenger. It seems an instinct of humanity to shrink with loathing from the serpent's touch, even when we know that the serpent has been deprived of his sting. The steps of the process seem to be the same with Christians in their own case, as it was with the twelve in regard to the dying of their Lord. Jesus, as we learn from the evangelists, three different times told them plainly that he must soon suffer death. The first time they were very angry; Peter rebuked him, and said, "Far be this from thee, Lord." The second time they were very sorrowful. The third time they seem to have received the intimation in silence. I suppose a Christian who has at last gotten the victory, could, in the hour of his departure, give a similar history of his own experience. In childhood, when first the certainty of death

began to break into his mind, he raged violently against it; afterwards he was solidly convinced of its truth and necessity, but the prospect made him very sorrowful; but now, when it is near, he meets it calmly, if not joyfully, as the dark, narrow door in the partition wall between time and eternity, through which the children are led from the place of exile into the mansions of the Father's house.

5. "Things present or things to come." These are not now separate and additional constituents of the believer's portion, but a concluding repetition of the whole. All things are yours, Christians, in virtue of your union to Christ, whether they lie within the horizon of time, or beyond it in the unseen eternity. Some of the things present have already been enumerated as the sure heritage of the saints; the things to come are thrown into the same scale. Here, however, our exposition must be brought to a close. We have reached now those things that no ear hath heard, and no tongue can tell. Be still and know that he is God. Whatsoever the Father owns becomes the portion of the children.

I once heard a father tell, that when he removed his family to a new residence where the accommodation was much more ample, and the substance much more rich and varied than that to which they had previously been accustomed, his youngest son, yet a lisping infant, ran round every room and scanned every article with ecstasy, calling out in childish wonder at every new sight, "Is this ours, father? and is this ours?" The child did not say "yours;" and I observed that the father while he told

the story was not offended with the freedom. You could read in his glistening eye that the infant's confidence in appropriating as his own all that his father had, was an important element in his satisfaction.

Such, I suppose, will be the surprise, and joy, and appropriating confidence with which the child of our Father's family will count all his own when he is removed from the comparatively mean condition of things present, and enters the infinite of things to come. When the glories of heaven burst upon his view, he does not stand at a distance like a stranger, saying, O God, these are thine. He bounds forward to touch and taste every provision which those blessed mansions contain, exclaiming, as he looks in the Father's face, Father, this and this is ours. The dear child is glad of all the Father's riches, and the Father is gladder of his dear child.

IX.

DIVINE WISDOM, AS SEEN IN THE NATURE
OF THE GOSPEL.

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”—JAMES iii. 17.

WHEN men were groping for wisdom on the earth, God sent wisdom from above. From everlasting this wisdom was with God, but his delights were with the sons of men. In the fulness of time he came,—God manifested in the flesh. He dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory. He fills a believing heart with his presence, and will yet fill with his presence a renovated world, as sunlight fills the day.

This text, so plain and pregnant in itself, may and should be viewed in two aspects, corresponding and yet distinct, like the type and the printed page, or the seal and the image which it leaves upon the wax. The wisdom that is from above is, in one aspect, the salvation of God, and, in another, the character of a Christian. For the one you look to the Scriptures; for the other, to a believer's life. Alike the mould which God has sent from heaven, and the new life which it forms on earth, are pure and peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. All these features may be found

objectively in *true religion*, and subjectively in *true Christians*. On either side the twofold truth admits and demands a separate investigation.

FIRST,

The wisdom that is from above is, Revealed Truth,—the gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Of this wisdom the text gives a remarkable series of distinct yet associated characteristics. In the construction of the original the attribute of purity is, by a special form of phraseology, separated from the rest as emphatically the first, and to it all the rest bear the relation of secondary and subordinate. In the actual examination of the passage, however, adopting an arrangement suggested partly by the meaning and partly by the form of the expressions, we shall class the whole series of eight separate attributes in four successive pairs. This method will contribute to the convenience, without impairing the accuracy of the illustration.

- I. First pure, then peaceable.
- II. Gentle, and easy to be entreated.
- III. Full of mercy and good fruits.
- IV. Without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

When God reveals himself to the lost, these are the characteristic features of the manifestation. It is in all respects the opposite of another wisdom which is “earthly” in its origin; “sensual, devilish” in its nature and effects. The double halo of glories which James

beheld encircling the salvation of God, will shine with a yet brighter radiance if we permit them to lean, while we look, against the dark ground of miscellaneous impurities with which all earth-born superstitions teem.

I. Revealed truth—the wisdom that is from above—is “first pure, then peaceable.” These two constitute a pair; they are connected by a link of peculiar significance and power. When the cry is raised on earth that its Maker is approaching,—when the criminals know by the rustling of his robe at the door of their prison that the Judge is near, the question, *Is it peace?* agitates their breasts and trembles on their tongues. The guilty desire peace, but dare not expect it. In prospect of the meeting, conscience, darkened but not dead, is shut up between the dread alternatives: If it be pure it cannot be peaceable, and if it be peaceable it cannot be pure. If, in dealing with the sinful, the Holy One should recede from his demand of purity, he might proclaim peace; but if he proclaim peace, he must be content to dwell with sin. Such are the forces that tear a human heart, ignorant as yet of the gospel, when the footsteps of the Judge are heard approaching. Nature and reason can neither find nor make a door of hope. The man is not able to believe that God will be pleased with sin, and therefore dare not hope that he will be at peace with sinners. The moral effect of this pressure, as long as it remains alone, is altogether evil. In the absence of hope, anticipation of punishment does not produce reformation. The force of this fear goes, not to cast sin out of his life in order that the man

may be fit company for God, but to cast God out of his memory, in order that the man may live at peace in his sin.

The wisdom that comes from above resolves this difficulty. It shows how God may dwell with man, and yet not sacrifice his purity; how man may dwell with God, and yet not lose his peace. It is first pure, and then peaceable. It neither tarnishes divine holiness, nor crushes human hope. It guards first the righteousness of the Judge; thereafter and therewith it obtains the pardon of the criminal. Here is light on the darkness; but it is light from heaven. The world by its own wisdom never knew God thus.

It is in Christ crucified that the two apparent contradictions meet. The promises which by themselves would be inconsistent and mutually destructive, "in him are yea, and in him Amen." The substitution of Christ for his people is the fulcrum which sustains alike the honour of God and the safety of believing men. The sacrifice of the just for the unjust breached the girdling prison wall of despair which encompassed the human race. Through the opening streamed a light from heaven. It is no longer the dark dilemma: If God be just, hell must be our portion: if we obtain his favour, his righteousness is dishonoured and his heaven defiled. In presence of the Lord our righteousness these difficulties vanish like mist before the rising sun. God preserves his own purity, and yet lifts the lost into his bosom: the guilty get a free pardon, and yet the motives which bind them to obedience, instead of being relaxed, are indefinitely

strengthened. Revelation is first pure and then peaceable: the Revealer is a just God and a Saviour.

II. Revealed truth—the wisdom that is from above—is “gentle and easy to be entreated.” This is not the view which springs in nature, and prevails in the world. Fear in the conscience of the guilty, after passing through various degrees of intensity and forms of manifestation, ever tends to culminate in the question, “Shall I give the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” See the result as it is exhibited in India. The various tribes that inhabit the peninsula do not think that their own gods are “gentle, and easy to be entreated.” The images with which we are all acquainted demonstrate the contrary. These representations of the worshipped are made by the worshippers, not in mockery of an abject superstition, but as an act of devotion to superior beings. These images, faithful translations of human thought into brass and silver, are hideous monsters. They seem to delight in the sufferings of their votaries. They are represented as the shedders of blood; and blood is continually offered on every great emergency to propitiate their favour. The chief gratification of a chief idol is the self-murder of his worshippers under the wheel of the truck that bears his weight.

See there what an unclean conscience in the dark counts the character of God. It is a case in which the primal germ of justice as an attribute of the Supreme has been overlaid and defaced by the incrustation of ages, and not subsequently restored by light from heaven.

Similar results appear in regions where revelation, once triumphant, has been quenched again by superstition. The Papists have veiled the compassionate countenance of Jesus, and taught their dupes that they must apply to more gentle mediators. They do not venture to go directly into the presence of Him who took the little children in his arms. They create for themselves intercessors who will be more easily entreated. Having lost the spiritual conception of the divine compassion, they betake themselves, instead, to the gross experiences of a carnal mind. They substitute a woman's softness for the gentleness of Christ. There is nothing in the idolatry of the pagan world more dishonouring to the one Mediator between God and man, than the worship of Mary, toward which the Romish hierarchy has for ages been drifting, and in which it has now irrevocably and finally sunk. They crucify Christ afresh who send trembling sinners to lay their aching heads on a kinder breast than his.

When a guilty creature comes in simplicity to God through Christ, it is easier to pour out the heart in the eternal Father's ear, than to confess to any fellow-sinner. If you get access to the throne of grace through the blood of the Lamb, you will be able to speak wants and weaknesses there, which you dare not confide to a mother.

The wisdom that is from above is gentle; "a bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." The wisdom that is from above is easy to be entreated; nay, more, he tenderly entreats you,—
"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Surely the wisdom that bids

an anxious inquirer turn from the Son of God our Saviour, and pour his confession into a more tender heart is "earthly, sensual, devilish."

III. Revealed truth—the wisdom that is from above—is "full of mercy and good fruits." So far from being in all cases united, these two, in their full dimensions, meet only in the gospel. The administration of a government might be full of mercy, and yet destitute of good fruits: nay, more, the want of good fruit might be directly due to the fulness of mercy. Mercy to the full,—an absolutely unconditional pardon to the guilty, is in human governments inconsistent with the public good. A ruler who empties the jails indiscriminately amid the huzzas of a rabble, cruelly injures the peaceable inhabitants. Bitter are the fruits of his wholesale forgiveness. The best wisdom of men cannot bring these two together; they devour each other as often as the attempt is made. What wisdom from beneath could not do, the wisdom that is from above has done. In the words of Paul: By faith we do not make void, we establish the law. In the gospel of the grace of God, absolute fulness of mercy to the guilty binds the forgiven more firmly to obedience.

The wisdom which is exhibited in the covenant is full of mercy. In general, we are all aware that the Christian dispensation is merciful; but more is written here regarding it. Expressly and specifically it is *full* of mercy; more there could not be. Perhaps you may remember some period in your experience when you were conscious of a wish that more mercy had been in the

gospel than there is, in order that it might cover your case. When a backslider has been a second time brought to a stand, and convictions again begin to pierce him;—when, looking back, and in, and up, he feels that there is not even in the gospel a provision that will allay his fear, he secretly wishes that God were more merciful than the Bible represents him to be. This man deceives himself. He is misled by a name. It is not more of mercy, but less of holiness that he desires to find in the gospel. God could not put more mercy in his covenant, for all his mercy is in it already. Woe to us if that which it contains comes short of our need. It is not a wider door of mercy that we want, but a larger liberty to sin.

This divine wisdom is also full of good fruits. The tree is good, its fruits are good, and it bears them abundantly. Time would fail to name or number them. Compare the condition, moral and economical, of a heathen country with the condition of our own, and the difference will represent, approximately, the more palpable of the good fruits which the gospel produces. Even the charities and the refinements of civilized society almost all spring directly from Christianity. The good fruits which the gospel bears for time are great; but greater and better fruits are ripening for use in eternity.

Either attribute is in itself precious; and there is an additional and peculiar interest in the union of the two. If there had not been divine wisdom in the plan, the profusion of mercy would have blasted in the germ all the promises of fruit. The mercy that is free to us was

dearly bought by our divine substitute. Justice was satisfied while the guilty were set free. There lies the peculiar feature of the mercy which God gives and sinners get through Christ. It does not encourage the forgiven to continue in sin. Nor is its virtue only negative, doing no harm ; it is intensely positive, doing more for actual holiness in the world than any administration of law, or infliction of vengeance could have done. Of two debtors, both forgiven by the same benevolent superior, which will love him most ? I suppose he to whom he forgave most ? A right answer. Such forgiveness as God bestows in Christ makes the forgiven love the forgiver much ; and love is the greatest, the only fulfiller of the law.

IV. Revealed truth—the wisdom that is from above—is “without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

In declaring that the wisdom from above cannot be charged with either of these vices, the text evidently proceeds upon an implied contrast with a wisdom from beneath which is deeply tinged with both. We are, indeed, so much accustomed to partiality and hypocrisy in human affairs, that it becomes difficult to lodge in our minds the conception of an offer entirely equal, and an announcement absolutely true. If during a long period of years you have been cheated more or less in every bargain ; if all the goods that you purchase turn out on examination to be more or less adulterated ; if you find by experience that you never can depend for safety on honesty in another, but always and only on vigilance in yourself, a habit of suspiciousness is engendered which

becomes at length a second nature. You smile sadly at professions of honesty, and quietly calculate the loss of the expected deceit. Accustomed in the moral department of human things to a continual state of siege, we have contracted a corresponding habit of suspicion. We lack the tendency, and perhaps the power, to exercise a pure implicit trust. We do not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, openly, instantly, confidingly ; we look askance at the offer, as if it were too good to be true, with the suspicion engendered by long experience of a deceitful heart and a deceitful world.

In this state our minds are when proposals are made to us in God's name on the business of our salvation. The offer comes to a heart on which there is, partly inherent and partly acquired, a bent of universal distrustfulness. How shall we be brought, in very deed and in simplicity, to trust that God is true, although every man should be a liar? It is not enough to be told that such he is. Though one rose from the dead to tell it, we would not, with these deceitful, deceived hearts, believe. A nature cannot be so changed. Except a man be born again he cannot see and receive the kingdom of God in the true little-child fashion. A "living hope" would be a precious possession for these cold, suspicious hearts ; but unto that blessed hope one must be "begotten again." "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." Take away this suspicious heart, and give a tender, trustful one. "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief."

Setting beauteous, divine truth in front of the opposite

and corresponding falsehood, in order that its white garment may more brightly shine, the apostle declares, finally, that the Mediator's proposal for peace with God is without partiality—offered alike to all, and without hypocrisy—truly offered to each.

1. Without partiality :—offered alike to all. All the fallen are in need, and all alike. It holds good, morally as well as materially, that there are no high places on the surface of the earth, when it is seen from heaven. It is level as well as low. His own goodness will not admit the best into favour; his own badness will not keep out the worst. Grace, absolutely sovereign and free, is the main principle of the gospel. When it comes to the world it finds there no good, but gives all. It is very difficult, but altogether necessary, clearly to understand and frankly to accept this feature of the divine plan. It recognises absolutely no difference between one man and another. In our view, indeed, and in our relations one toward another, there are degrees of good and evil, as there are inequalities on the surface of the earth; but these differences entirely disappear when the eye of the Omniscient searches the hearts and ways of men. Rightly we count and call the sea “level,” although its parts are constantly and convulsively leaping upward; so lies this surging sea of wickedness under the eye of God.

The provisions of the gospel correspond to the condition of mankind. The covenant has been framed according to its author's view of the world's need. Mercy is not moulded in this shape for the moral and in that shape for the vicious, but alike for all. No human being

is either kept out or taken in, on account of anything peculiar in his heart or his history. Beware of thinking on the one hand that you have a better prospect of being accepted because of something good, or a worse because of something evil in yourself. Christ came to call sinners to repentance ; in that character simply you must come. The blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin ; however deeply you are stained, you may come. Whatever the water-flood in Noah's time may have been, the baptism of wrath that comes on the world for sin covers the highest mountains of its merit. The ark of safety, needed by all alike, is offered alike to all. Those who stand on the highest place will be lost if they remain without ; those who stand on the lowest place will be saved if they come in.

2. Without hypocrisy :—truly offered to each. What have we here ? Can the Supreme, consistently with his own honour, plead before his creatures, that he is not a hypocrite, making his offer appear more generous than it really is ? Yes ; such is his long-suffering condescension. All the repetitions of his offer are of this kind—the overflowings of a compassion that is more than full. A God less gracious might have opened a way of escape, and proclaimed it once, and shut it then for ever against all who did not instantly flee. So did not our God. He does not take our first denial, nor our second. He stands at the door and knocks ; he pleads with sinners, Why will ye die ?

Here is a word of wonderful condescension ; the offer of mercy through Christ to sinful men is not an act of hypocrisy. Strange measure of forbearance this ! But

is it needed? Do men deny or doubt the sincerity of the offer which the Messenger of the covenant has brought to the world? They do. Nor is it here and there a rare example of peculiar wickedness; it is the commonest sin I know. We do not speak this distrust; but we live it. In answer to this dark suspicion of his sincerity which the Omniscient reads in our hearts, the Spirit witnesses through James that the proposals of pardon which the gospel brings are "without hypocrisy."

I have seen a dog tried in this fashion: his owner took a full dish of finest human food from the table, as it had been prepared for the family, and set it before him, encouraging him by word and gesture to eat. The sagacious brute shrank back, lay down, refused, and gave many unmistakeable indications that he would be too glad to eat, but he saw clearly it was all a pretence—it was too good for him, and never intended for him—and if he should attempt to taste it, the dish would be snatched away, while he would perhaps receive a blow for daring to take the offer in earnest.

The picture, although its associations are less grave, possesses, in relation to our subject, the one essential quality of trueness. It represents, more exactly than anything I know in nature, the treatment which God's offer gets from men. We treat the offer as if the offerer were not sincere. The greatness and goodness of the gift are precisely the features which our guilty minds pervert into grounds of suspicion that it is not really meant for us. If it were some crumb, or husk, we might think it suitable, and accept it greedily. If we were permitted

to creep in stealthily, to get a bit of bread and shelter among the hired servants, we could believe that the offer was intended to be accepted, and accept it accordingly ; but the Father's bosom, his kiss, his tears, his home, his ring, his feast, his heritage—all this to us, now, and free—this prodigal heart, soaked long in sin, dark, hard, narrow, unhopeful, distrustful, counts it too good to be true. Alas for the pitiful condition of sinful men !—refusing the great salvation, because it is so great that they cannot believe it is really intended to be given free to the unworthy. We have been so accustomed to untrue pretence, both in ourselves and others, that distrust has become our nature. It seems as impossible for our spirit as for our flesh to come again as that of a little child.

All things are possible with God. Look unto Jesus. He is the resurrection and the life. Lord, increase our faith. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. Ask, and ye shall receive. Ask, and ye shall receive both the gift of pardon, and the true, willing, trustful heart, that will take it as a little child from a Father's hand.

X.

DIVINE WISDOM, AS SEEN IN THE EFFECTS
OF THE GOSPEL.

“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.—JAMES iii. 17.

SECOND.

WE now consider “the wisdom that is from above” in its secondary and subjective aspect; as a lesson printed on the life of believing men by the type of revealed truth;—as the image left on human hearts by the seal which came from heaven and pressed them. In the preceding discourse we looked on wisdom as it came down from heaven; in this discourse we look upon the impression which it has left on earth. There, wisdom represented the person and work of Christ; here it represents the character and conduct of his true disciples.

They speak, all too lightly sometimes, of “the divine in man;” alas, his glory has departed! The marks of his original excellence, as chief of creation and child of God, are almost entirely blotted out. Poor, and wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked is man, until help from on high reach him. The divine in man!—yea, but it did not spring indigenously there; it came down from the Father of lights. If any of the fallen are now wise, the wisdom has come from above; but when it comes it

does not sink out of sight like water spilt on the ground. Saving truth received into a believing heart, and practised in the Christian life, asserts its origin and displays its character. For the original imprinting type you must look to the gospel of our Lord and Saviour; but the legible epistle you may read in the life of any true disciple. It is more easy to read the printed page than the printing type; hence, when the Master wants witnesses, he calls and qualifies living men. Pointing to the Galilean fishermen who followed him, he said in his great intercessory prayer (John xvii.), "Father, I am glorified in them." The wisdom of which James writes comes from above, but it finds a dwelling-place here below. It lives in the heart, and labours in the life of believers. You may read the essence of the gospel from the page of the humblest Christian's history.

The wisdom that is from above is, in this aspect, the character of a converted man. "The epistle of Christ," like the type which printed it, is,—

- I. First pure, then peaceable.
- II. Gentle, and easy to be entreated.
- III. Full of mercy and good fruits.
- IV. Without partiality, and without hypocrisy.

I. The new creature—the work of the Spirit in believers—is "first pure, then peaceable."

1. In relation to God. In his approach to you there was first purity and then peace; therefore, as an echo answers to the sound that waked it, the same two in the

same order will characterize your approach to him. If he come to you in peace only, trampling on purity, you will not regard purity in your relations with him. It is thus that the denial or neglect of the atonement undermines the foundations of holiness. But when peace reaches us through a purity which the Son of God secured by shedding his own blood, we cannot accept this salvation and yet make light of sin. As the softened wax cannot show any other figure than the corresponding converse of the seal that has been pressed upon it; so the broken, humbled, believing heart, when it has yielded to the wisdom from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, cannot present upward to God any other character than a copy of his own. Owing to remaining hardness and obliquity in the recipient heart, the image is in no case perfectly transferred; but in all cases of true conversion the man is more or less fully made partaker of the divine nature. As God would not come in peace to the sinful, except on the foundations of holiness, honoured first, true Christians, much as they desire peace, do not expect—will not ask it on other terms. The same mind that was in Christ is also found in Christians.

The cross of Christ is the grand safeguard of purity in all who truly believe. If God had displayed justice without mercy, we would have lost hope; if he had displayed mercy without justice, we would have been encouraged to continue in sin. In the one case the manifestation would have produced despair; and in the other, immorality. But divine wisdom, as well as justice and mercy, was in the plan. Peace through purity was pro-

claimed from heaven ; happiness and holiness echoed the answer up from earth.

In this way we reach a rule by which we may test the soundness of our hope. He who is at peace in impurity has not received upon his heart the imperial seal of the King Eternal, but the counterfeit of some false pretender. Your spirit will be cast in the mould of the mercy for which it hopes. God will see in you a copy, more or less perfectly rendered, of what you see in him.

2. In relation to ourselves. Peace of conscience is sweet, whether it be false or true. In human beings it is like one of the appetites of nature. The desire to avoid or escape remorse is an instinct of humanity, acting as strongly and steadily as the desire to avoid or escape bodily pain. We have, in common with the lower animals, bodily members provided with nerves of sensation. In common with them, we endeavour to avoid pain in any member, and to escape from it if it has already begun. Conscience, though a faculty of the soul, is in this respect like another member in man, of which the brutes are destitute. This, as well as other members, is liable to be injured ; and when it is injured, we suffer as acutely as if the injury had been inflicted on hand or foot. While the desire to escape from the pain of an accusing conscience is so strong in our nature, there is reason to fear that the error of peace at any price will be common amongst us. Although, in the constitution of human nature, admitted sin wounds the conscience and tends to give pain, peace in union with impurity seems, notwithstanding, to be a common attainment. Our own

hearts are the chief of the false teachers who say, "Peace, peace, when there is no peace." When the hope of mercy rests on any scheme of false doctrine, or any insinuation of self-righteousness, the man will stride forward to peace of conscience although he should trample purity under foot: but when we take divine wisdom, as it comes to us from above, we cannot walk towards peace over the body of holiness.

What a depth of wisdom lies in this feature of the gospel! The inscription which its type, wherever it is admitted, leaves in the deep of a human soul, is, Impurity disturbs peace. When I accept mercy through the blood of Christ, my desire for peace of conscience, one of the strongest forces in my being, becomes a weight hung over a pulley exerting a constant pressure to lift me up into actual righteousness.

3. In relation to the world around. Those who have, through faith, gone down with Christ in his baptism of blood to wash their sins away, acquire a depth and solidity of character which enables them to bear unmoved the tossings of a troubled time. An established, experienced, hopeful Christian, is, in the world, like an iceberg in a swelling sea. The waves rise and fall. Ships strain and shiver, and nod on the agitated waters. But the iceberg may be seen from far receiving the breakers on its snow-white sides, casting them off unmoved, and where all else is rocking to and fro, standing stable like the everlasting hills. The cause of its steadiness is its depth. Its bulk is bedded in calm water beneath the tumult that rages on the surface. Although, like the

ships, it is floating in the water, it receives and throws off the angry waves, like the rocks that gird the shore.

Behold the condition and attitude of Christians. They float in the same sea of life with other men, and bear the same buffetings; but they are not driven hither and thither, the sport of wind and water. The wave strikes them, breaks over them, and hisses past in foam; but they remain unmoved. They were not caught by surprise, while they had a slight hold of the surface. The chief part of their being lies deep beyond the reach of these superficial commotions. Their life, "hid with Christ in God," bears, without breaking, all the strain of the storm. Those who, through the blood of the Lamb and the ministry of the Spirit, become "first pure," may well afford to be "then peaceable," although they are swimming in the shifting sea of time, and not standing yet on the stable shore of eternity. "He that believeth shall not make haste." In times of trial the deepest is steadiest.

In as far as the world consists of individual men, animated by an evil spirit, with whom Christians must hold intercourse in life, the rule is not peace, absolutely and in all circumstances; but first purity at all hazards, and then, "if it be possible, as much as in you lieth," also peace. It is not enough to read this law in the Bible. It is not spoken into Christians; Christians are moulded into it. Off their Redeemer, in the act of cleaving to him for newness of life, the redeemed take this feature of their character. That characteristic lies in the wisdom from above, and therefore it is found deposited beneath,

in all who have been renewed in the spirit of their minds. Looking unto Jesus, a disciple perceives that though "God is love," he would not make peace with sinners at the expense of pureness; being an "imitator of God," as a dear child should be, he strives to do likewise in his intercourse with men.

II. The new creature—the work of the Spirit in believers—is "gentle, and easy to be entreated."

These two features, also, of the heavenly type, may be read on the terrestrial page. This glory of the Lord shines dimly, indeed, but truly, in the life of those who have been created again in his image. Receiving out of his fulness grace for grace, Christians obtain, among other things, some of "the gentleness of Christ." Those who possess any of it long for more. They speak of virtue being its own reward; and this is eminently true of gentleness. Every one knows how pleasant it is to receive gentle treatment from another; but as of other good things generally, so especially of this, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" it.

Do not, however, expect that when you have believed, the features of Christ's likeness will come down upon you one by one, without any thought or effort on your part. This assimilation to the character of Christ which goes on "within you," gradual as the growth of a mustard-seed, and pervasive as the spread of leaven, is none other than the kingdom of God—that kingdom which suffereth violence, and which the violent take by force. Strive to enter in. Do not count that you have

already attained, or are already perfect ; but, forgetting the things which are behind, press on to reach this high calling which still attaches to divine wisdom when it has been transferred to the life of believing men,—gentle, and easy to be entreated.

Although the lot of men is, on the whole, much more equal than it seems, yet at certain particular points some have more to bear and do than others. Hard knots occur in some persons as in some trees, while others are constitutionally smoother in the grain. But while I willingly confess that more gnarled natures must endure more pain in the process of being made meek and gentle, I hesitate to own that, in the end, these Christians remain ordinarily more harsh and ungainly than others. On them, indeed, were high, hard places which caught on everything that came near, giving much trouble both to themselves and their neighbours ; but when the whole man is brought into subjection to the law of Christ, and placed, accordingly, under the inexorable processes of the Spirit's ministry, these highest, hardest places, are first rubbed down, and become at last, perhaps, the lowest and the smoothest. I think, although it is not a uniform law, it is, notwithstanding, a common experience, to find in the new man a very low place where in the old man there was a mountain-height. "Why should it be thought impossible with you that God should raise the dead?" And why should it be thought impossible, when he undertakes to create a new world or a new man, that every valley should be exalted, and every mountain and hill should be brought low? Where the old was harsh and

overbearing, the new may be gentle and easy to be entreated ; where the old was timidly yielding, the new may be faithful and bold.

Beware of excusing, either to yourself or others, admitted defects of Christian meekness, by allegations of constitutional peculiarities. Rather, if the high things of nature still remain high, fear lest you be either not under grace, or not growing in it ; for “ if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

III. The new creature—the work of the Spirit in believers—is “ full of mercy and good fruits.”

It is a principle of the gospel that he who gets mercy shows mercy. The parable of the servant who was forgiven much by his Lord, and then refused to forgive a little to his fellow, is intended to set off that beautiful truth by the dark contrast of the corresponding falsehood. The man who receives the gospel, and because he has received it, is, like the gospel, full of mercy. The little cistern is brought into connection with the living spring, and the grace which is infinite in the Master, is transferred to the disciple in the measure of his powers. When a man is full of mercy in this sinning, suffering world, a stream of benevolence will be found flowing in his track, all through the wilderness. If the reservoir within his heart be kept constantly charged by union with the upper spring, there need be neither ebbing nor intermission of the current all his days, for opening opportunities everywhere abound.

Small though the vessel be, it will distribute much in

the course of a generation, if it is ever full and ever flowing. See that well on the mountain-side—a small, rude, rocky cup full of crystal water, and that tiny rill flowing through a breach in its brim. The vessel is so diminutive that it could not contain a supply of water for a single family a single day. But, ever getting through secret channels, and ever giving by an open overflow, day and night, summer and winter, from year to year, it discharges, in the aggregate, a volume to which its own capacity bears no appreciable proportion. The flow from that diminutive cup might, in drought or war, become life to all the inhabitants of a great city. It is thus that a Christian, if he is full of mercy and good fruits, is a greater blessing to the world than either himself or his neighbours deem. Let no disciple of Christ either think himself excused, or permit himself to be discouraged from doing good, because his talents and opportunities are few. Your capacity is small, it is true ; but if you are in Christ, it is the capacity of a well. Although it does not contain much at any moment, so as to attract attention to you for your gifts, it will give forth a great deal in a lifetime, and many will be refreshed.

IV. The new creature—the work of the Spirit in believers—is “without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

These features also remain in divine wisdom when it is transferred to the heart and life of Christians. These plants, though not now indigenous in human nature, may, when transplanted, and watched, and watered, grow

there, and bear substantial fruit. If we would possess and exercise Impartiality and Sincerity in our intercourse with men, we must borrow them from the pattern of God's intercourse with us in the gospel of his Son. As he deals with us, we must learn to deal with each other. We have nothing which we did not receive.

1. Without partiality. It is not the impartiality of indifference, but the impartiality of love. Some people practically discover that to be impartial is an easy attainment. They contrive to care equally for all, by caring nothing for any. This is the equality of the grave. It is not the kind of regard which God has shown to us, and therefore should not be the kind which we show to a brother. Our text describes the impartiality not of withholding, but of giving,—the impartiality of a heart that is full of mercy, and ever seeking a channel of overflow. The empty may easily be equal ; but with these we are not now concerned. Those who have through grace been filled, must seek more grace, in order that they may distribute impartially. As there is no respect of persons with God, there should be none with the godly.

No partiality for *persons*. There is room for great advancement here. We have been too much in the habit of valuing a human being according to the texture of the dress that covers him, or the amount of his balance at the bank. Look to the wisdom that is from above, and learn from it to love the poor as well as the rich ; the rude as well as the polished ; the ungainly as well as the winsome. How low we are ! How unlike Christ are even the best Christians !

There is no law which requires or permits us to love filth as well as cleanliness, or falsehood as well as truth; but the man,—the immortal creature who has fallen by sin, and may be restored through the Redeemer,—the man we must learn to love and long for, in whatever condition he may be found, and whatever character he may manifest. The redemption of the soul is precious, and the opportunity of applying it in any given case will soon cease for ever. Look at the world as Jesus did, and let your compassions flow like his.

No partiality for *peoples*. Care equally for drunken Sabbath-breakers on the Clyde, and ignorant idol-worshippers on the Ganges. What a length and breadth of exercise ground is open to Christians! Impartiality, however, does not mean communism. It touches not the ties of family or neighbourhood. As radii in a circle are closest near the centre, and towards the circumference lie more widely apart, the affections of a human heart do and should fall thickest on those who are nearest. Expressly on this principle the Christian mission was instituted at first. Love, in the heart of the first disciples, was recognised by Him who kindled it, to be of the nature of fire or light. He did not expect it to fall on distant places without first passing through the intermediate space. From Jerusalem, at his command, and under the Spirit's ministry, it radiated through Judæa, and from Judæa to Samaria, and thence to the ends of the earth, (Acts i.)

A certain proverb is much used, and much abused in our day, by persons who discourage Christian missions to

the heathen : Charity begins at home. Expressing only half a truth, it is so employed as to be equivalent to a whole falsehood. It would be more true and more salutary if it were written in full : Charity begins at home, but does not end there.

No partiality for *sins*. It is hard to learn what our errors are in this respect, and harder to correct them. Habits that rank as national, whether in conduct or costume, may deviate far from propriety, and yet not attract attention, much less elicit reproof. One huge partiality, for example, most offensive to God, and most hurtful to men, covers great dishonesties, and punishes small ones. A young man who had used for his own purposes a hundred pounds of his employers' money, as it was passing through his hands, told me in the narrow prison-cell where he was dreeing his punishment, that at the same time in the same city men were going at large and living in splendour, who had notoriously committed the same crime, but prudently committed it on a larger scale than he. I was compelled to own the fact, although, of course, I refused to accept it as an apology. Of the parties to the vices that grow in pairs, why is one accepted in the drawing-room, and the other banished to the darksome wynd ? The wisdom which plans and practically sanctions this distinction has not descended from above. The Church, too, must learn to copy more closely the impartiality of her head. She must not throw a mantle over one sin, while she brandishes the rod of discipline over another. The sin that excludes from the kingdom of heaven should exclude from the communion of saints. Oh, when shall

Christians learn from Christ to be "without partiality?" It is not easy for the Church in the world to sail against the world's stream, but it is her business to strive in that direction, and her privilege to ask and receive the Spirit, as a breath from heaven, to enable her to overcome.

2. Without hypocrisy. It seems one of the plainest precepts of morality that we should not be one thing, and pretend to be another. God is true in showing mercy; if we receive it in simplicity, we shall be true like him. When a sinner, softened in repentance, lays himself for pardon along a crucified Christ, he takes on from the Lord a transparent trueness which tells distinctly whose he is, to every passenger he meets on the highway of life.

In our approach to *God* we should be without hypocrisy. Strange, that such an exhortation should ever be needed! Lying unto men you can understand, while you condemn; but lying unto God seems as inexplicable in fact as it is unjustifiable in morality. To assume an appearance which is contrary to truth, in acts of direct intercourse with the All-seeing, seems so stupid, that, at first sight, we would suppose it to be rare. Alas, nothing is more common! How much hypocrisy there is in prayer! Nor is the sin confined to those who are hypocrites from the root. Some are all hypocrisy; and even the best are not entirely free from it. It was to genuine disciples that Jesus said, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy." It spreads like leaven. Both prayer and watchfulness are needed to keep or cast it out.

He who permits the wisdom that is from above to impress his heart and form his character, will be without hypocrisy in his intercourse with *men*. But although the seal is perfect, the human soul, at the best, imperfectly receives the image. Portions of the "stony heart" never fully softened, remain unshapely even after the heavenly type has been applied. None can compute the number or measure the magnitude of the defects. But in Christians a likeness to Christ's sincerity has been begun; it is their business to hold fast and press on; it is his prerogative to make the likeness perfect in his own time and by his own power.

As there was no partiality and no hypocrisy in redeeming love when it came down to earth, there will be none in redeemed men when they rise to heaven. There could not be "peace on earth" while these thorns were tearing us at every movement. "This is not your rest because it is polluted." When partiality and hypocrisy are wholly and for ever put off, the weary will be glad. When that which is perfect has come, there will no longer be any temptation to partiality, for all will be alike lovely; no longer any temptation to hypocrisy, for each will truly be all that himself—that angels—that God could desire.

XI.

CORRECTED ESTIMATES.

“Honour all men.”—1 PETER ii. 17.

HERE are three distinct ideas closely interwoven and reciprocally affecting each other, yet capable in some measure of being separated, and so subjected to a more minute analysis. I shall employ the term “value” instead of “honour,” as equivalent to “esteem,” which the translators have placed in the margin, and, on the whole, expressing more exactly the apostle’s mind. As to the method of conducting the inquiry, I find that arrangement to be practically most convenient, if not logically most correct, which simply lays the emphasis successively on each of the three English words ; thus :—

I. *Value.*

II. *Value men.*

III. *Value all men.*

I. *Value.* On this point some light may be obtained by looking to the word itself, and more by observing the relation which it bears to others associated with it here.

1. The root on which this expression grows signifies a price or value. This original meaning adheres to it with more or less of strictness through all its forms, and all its applications. It is the word which in Matt. xxvii. 9

has been translated "value:" "They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;" and "honour" in Matt. xv. 4: "Honour thy father and thy mother." Honour, as it is usually understood, is only the external expression of the value which you may have set upon the object. You weigh the worth of the man, and honour him accordingly. The estimate fixed by the judgment is the foundation of the honour expressed by the lips.

2. We may more fully ascertain and more accurately fix the import of the term, by examining its relations to others which are associated with it in the context. The three first precepts stand by themselves: "Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God." The series is complete. It begins on earth, and ends in heaven. The first is a horizontal line lying along the surface of the world in contact with all humanity; the second stretches through a higher region where the spirits of the just not made perfect yet, are striving to crucify the flesh and serve the Lord; the third is a vertical line, running right up to God. The Holy Spirit in this word prescribes to believers the affections with which they should regard respectively three separate objects. The first and lowest of these objects is humanity as it now is,—all mankind; the next above it is the regenerated, the redeemed from among men who are still in the body; the highest is God. One kind of regard is due to human beings, however low their state or bad their character; another kind of regard is due to those who are born again, and have become members of the family of God; and yet another

kind of regard is due to the Creator of all, the Recreator of his own.

We shall better understand the honour due to all men when we compare it with the love which is due to the brotherhood, and the fear which is due to God. The object, in each case so precisely defined, goes far to determine the specific affection with which it should be regarded. In the light of Scripture we may learn the reverential, yet confiding worship which is implied in fearing God. There, too, with equal distinctness, we may learn with what kind of love brother should regard brother in the household of faith. The position of these two being fixed enables us to determine more precisely the bearings of the third.

They who fear God and love the brotherhood need not be much at a loss as to the kind of affection with which they should look upon humanity at large. The two higher afford the observer a commanding position, and well-relieved land-marks, for surveying the last and lowest. Where the fear of God and the love of the brotherhood are wanting or weak, great errors will necessarily occur in the estimate of men. What is it that distracts and torments the world, but error in the estimate which man forms of his fellow? Some get too much honour, and others too little. These extremes have thrown the machinery of society out of gear. Hence the adulation of the great; hence the oppression of the poor.

The man who is godly and brotherly is also humane. He who sets a proper value on the higher things, sets also a proper value on the lower. Look on men—the

human race in general—in the light of the fear which you owe to God, and the love which you cherish toward the brethren; thus you will neither meanly flatter, nor coldly neglect; you will count the meanest a man, and the mightiest no more.

II. Value *men*.* The general Scriptural rule, “Be imitators of God as dear children” (Eph. v. 1), readily admits of application to this particular case. God’s estimate of man is marked distinctly in creation, and more fully manifested in redemption.

Every step of progress in science is a new discovery of the high value which the Maker set upon his creature, man. All the nicer relations and uses of plants and animals have been arranged with a view to man, for he only is capable of observing or turning them to account. For him the minerals have all obviously been made, for he only can use them. All the rich furniture of this world bears obvious marks of having been constructed for the convenience of its chief inhabitant. The house was arranged, and all its furnishings completed, and living creatures destined for servants provided, before men, the children of the family, were brought home. All that the Father did in constructing this earth and these heavens, he did for our sakes.

But the grandest evidence of the value which God sets on man is seen in the mission, and ministry, and sacrifice of Christ. The marks which creation contains of a high

* Although the word corresponding to “men” does not appear in the original, the masculine adjective is, in the circumstances, equivalent.

value set upon its intended occupant, have respect to man as he was conceived in the eternal council, and as he came from the omnipotent hand. But how fallen from that high estate and holy character ere Christ came to dwell among us! This immortal being was damaged more than we can comprehend when the Son of God took our nature, and undertook our cause. The object whom he came to seek and save was worthless and wicked. But man in his lost estate was still precious in the eye of God. So high in heaven was the estimate of even ruined man, that, when no other price could buy the captive, the Son of God gave himself, the just for the unjust.

A jewel has dropped from the wearer's neck into a deep and filthy sewer. The owner looking from aloft loathes the fetid object, and loves it too,—so loves it, in spite of its loathsomeness, that, rather than lose it, he plunges into the pool, wades among its filth, and feels for the lost treasure. If he find it, he goes home rejoicing; and when the jewel has been burnished again, he rejoices more than ever to see it on his own bosom receiving bright glances from the sun, and throwing them back as bright.

In some such way, making allowance for the difference between the finite and the infinite, did Christ set a high value on fallen, polluted men. In some such way does he now rejoice over those whom he has rescued from perdition, and carried into rest.

The law of the Lord, "Love one another as I have loved you," applies to the estimate of human kind in their fallen state, as well as to the love of the brother-

hood who have been begotten again. Christians should be like Christ, both in valuing those who are still without, and in loving those who are already within. He counts much on getting the fallen raised, and he rejoices over the raised with more than a mother's love. The only right path for us is in his footsteps.

Value man more than meaner things.

Your House, for example, is not so precious as its human inmates. It is right to keep the house in order, and right that children and servants should work for that end; but you ought jealously to watch the comparative estimate which you insensibly and habitually entertain of a well-kept house, and of those who keep it. If you tenderly care for walls and ornaments, careless of immortal creatures made in the image of God who dwell under your roof, you are contending with the Almighty, and will be crushed in the conflict. In many families of this community which are maintained at an enormous expense, the comforts of home diminish in proportion as the outlay for procuring them is increased. The God of the families of the whole earth is dishonoured and displeased when things are set over the head of persons. This fundamental error in the estimate vitiates all your calculations, and disappoints all your prospects of happiness. Devote your chief care to the household, and the house will be better cared for.

Your Farm is, in God's sight, and should be in yours, of less value than your farmers. Scotland, as an agricultural country, owns no superior, perhaps no equal, in the world. But a blight lies on this department of our

prosperity, because we have overvalued our stock and undervalued our hands. In many parts of the country a system prevails which gives brutes and implements a monopoly of care, and abandons men and women to moral and physical degradation. Houses for cattle are ostentatiously raised to the highest pitch of refinement, while the men who tend them feed by day and sleep by night in dreary, damp, dirty hovels, where cleanliness and modesty are not only unknown, but impossible. I bear witness of what I have seen ; and I warn my countrymen that they cannot steal a march upon the Omniscient so as to prosper permanently in their sin. Already retribution has begun in the deteriorated moral habits of the community. We have got a set of false weights and measures with which we are cheating ourselves and our neighbours. Our measures for men and things must be brought into accordance with the royal law : " Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you do ye even so unto them." The willing are already making exertions in this department ; but we shall continue exposed to providential retribution until we contrive, on a national scale, to compel the unwilling to go and do likewise.

Our Manufactures are grievously out of joint from the same cause. We have practically set a high price on the work, and a low price on the workers. The Papists exhibit a napkin which was used, they say, to wipe the sweat from the brow of Jesus, and retains his image still. There is at least a fine idea in the fable. If the pale hands and haggard countenances of the workers were photographed upon the web, the spectre forms, glancing

from the luscious folds, would startle both the sellers and the wearers. But pictures of the neglected and lost,—lost, perhaps, because neglected,—are printed somewhere. God's image does not go out of God's sight. He recognises it through rags and squalor which some dainty eyes would disdain to look upon. We cannot save every one; perhaps some of us are in a position so humble in itself, or so distant from the scene, that we could not save any one. We are not responsible for the talents which the Lord has not entrusted to our charge; but we are all responsible for obeying this command: "*Honour men.*" Value highly immortal beings made in their Creator's likeness, and capable yet of living to his praise. We act according to our estimates. Estimate humanity aright in the habit of your hearts, and your conduct will fashion itself naturally accordant, as a river finds its way to the sea. Value the whole man, and not merely a part. In particular, and for obvious practical purposes, value his soul as well as his body, and his body as well as his soul. So did Christ; and therefore so should we. The body's sufferings did not occupy his attention to the neglect of the soul's sins; the soul's sins did not occupy his attention to the neglect of the body's sufferings.

As the legs of the lame are not equal, a one-sided philanthropy is abortive, whichever side it may be. You cannot do good to the poor by merely supplying his material wants. Unless you lift his spirit from despair into hope, and lead his spirit from darkness to light, your gifts go all into a bag with holes. You must be always giving, and yet he is never full. On the other

side, the ordinary path to the soul lies through the body's senses, and all your efforts for spiritual good may prove abortive, if you do not clear material obstructions out of your way. Do good to the whole man as you have opportunity. Neglect not to entertain these strangers that step about in human form upon the earth, for in so doing you entertain angels unawares,—fallen, indeed, but capable yet of a glorious immortality.

III. Value *all* men.

There is no respect of persons with God, and there should be none with men. When you fail to value aright any man or class of men, you are fighting against God, and will certainly be hurt. He that falls upon this stone shall be broken. Action and reaction are equal and opposite. Suppose you and your neighbour are walking abreast on a pavement of pure ice; and suppose you put forth your strength to push your neighbour off the way on one side, you may perhaps succeed, but the same effort at the same time has pushed yourself as far from the path on the other side.

The operation of this principle may be seen in all ranks and in all places. Wherever and whenever a man fails to give a neighbour his due, he thereby to the same extent injures himself. The machine of Providence brings vengeance on the transgressor as its awful wheels move round.

Take an example from the treatment of negro slaves. Value all men, says God's word: No, said we till lately, and say many of our race in America still,—we shall

value some men, and others we shall despise. The white we shall honour, but not the black. I do not detail the facts which prove the delinquency ; I assume these, and direct your attention to the retribution which lies hid in Providence, and smites the transgressor with an unseen hand. White men cannot push black men aside from the right position without pushing themselves as far from the right character. The loss which they suffer is greater than the loss which they inflict. As it is more blessed to give than to receive, so it is more cursed to deprive another of his rights than to be deprived of your own. I would rather have my condition deteriorated by another's violence, than my character deteriorated by my own sin.

Man's foundation is not like the everlasting hills. It is not in his power to push another, and yet not move himself. The oppressor and the oppressed are by the same operation equally, although in opposite directions, depraved. As far as the slave is pressed down beneath the level into brutish indifference, so far is the master thrust up above the level into supercilious pride. As deeply as the vice of meanness is scored into the black by the lash, so deeply is the vice of arrogance scored into the white by lashing. Those are injured by suffering oppression, and these by inflicting it. Nothing is gained by a false estimate of the value of any man. The circles of Providence, like the celestial bodies, correct aberrations, and right themselves as they go round. The same sleepless eye, and the same avenging arm, are over masters and servants in the economical relations of our own land.

Value the Young. How precious these germs are !

These spring-buds are lovely to look upon, but their worth is greater than their beauty. An immortal life is opening there; heed it well. Proprietors rear strong fences round young trees, while they leave aged forests to take their chance. Permit not the immortal to be twisted at the very starting of its growth, for the want of such protection as it is in your power to afford. By failing practically to value little ones at their real worth, we both suffer and inflict an incalculable injury. They will be the men and women of the generation, when we become children again. If they grow crooked for want of our care to-day, we shall lack support when we are too feeble to bear our own weight.

Don't spoil these tender, precious things. Tell them no lie. Speak no vile or profane word in their hearing. Let no drop fall on that polished surface, which may eat like rust into the heart, and become the death of a soul.

Value the Poor and Ignorant. In that state Christ valued you, believer. He did not pass you because you were worthless. He came to make you rich in grace, and to rejoice over you then.

Value the Rich. We speak here not of the Christian brotherhood, but of human kind. Many of those whom the world call rich are selling themselves for vile stuff. They give themselves for money and show. The rich man's soul is more precious than all his riches. If he cannot estimate the things at their proper worth, you can, and should. He is as precious as the poor, and will be as worthy, if he is redeemed, when he walks with his Redeemer in white.

Value the Vicious. Although they wallow in a deep mire to-day, they have fallen from a high estate, and may yet regain it. If one who had been a king's son should, in the frequent revolutions of these days, be cast a naked and penniless wanderer on our shores, we would not think of him as of a common beggar. If he should come in want to your door, you would look with a kind of awe on him who is the heir of a sovereign house, and may yet sit upon a throne. Under his piteous condition you would recognise what he has been, and may yet be.

When an abandoned woman passes you on the street do not despise her. Perhaps beneath that bold look shame begins to swell, and would burst into repentance if it could get an outlet. She is human; Christ is human; and therefore she may yet be partaker of the divine nature. A jewel most precious lies under these loathsome incrustations. That is a precious soul. If she were snatched from the burning, she might be on earth yet a sister beloved, and in heaven a daughter of the Lord Almighty. Despise her not as you pass. Let your heart glue itself to hers; and if you must pass, unable to draw her from the pit, let it be such a passing as will leave your own heart torn and bleeding for the outcast whom you cannot save. Let not the frequency of such a contact rub your heart hard and smooth, so that other victims passing to perdition shall slip easily over, getting no grip, and leaving no pain within you. Never learn to pass the lost without a sigh, for she is human, immortal. If she is lost, the loss is eternal; if she were won, the gain would be unspeakable, to your Lord and you.

It is time that the brotherhood in Christ were aroused to estimate aright the value of a drunkard, and the peculiar danger of his state. They who spurn him away in disgust, and they who make merry with his weakness, are alike out of their reckoning. We should not lightly laugh at him on the one hand; we should not hopelessly give him up on the other. The saddest feature of the drunkard's sad case is the tendency that may be observed, even among earnest Christians, to give him up as beyond the reach of human help. I see that some, even of those who are girding themselves for saving work upon the world, without saying that the inveterate inebriate is absolutely irreclaimable, are deliberately passing by the class, in order that they may quarry in other veins where experience holds out greater hope of success. The peculiar hopelessness of the advanced stage in this form of sin gives peculiar force to the maxim, Prevention is better than cure.

That poor staggering drunkard is worth more than worlds, if he were won. If you could win him, he would be a crown of joy to you in the great day. "Of some have compassion, making a difference: and others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire" (Jude 22, 23). They who hope in Christ should not count any case hopeless.

Value Yourself. Do not hold yourselves cheap, ye who may have Christ for your brother, and heaven for your home. This body the Lord has cleansed, that he may make it his own dwelling-place, and why should these loathsome lusts be permitted to possess and defile it? These lips are needed to support a part in the new

song of the redeemed out of all nations, and why should they be lent out as instruments of sin? I shall not lightly accord my company to every comer, for the King is courting it: "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world."

In estimating the value of yourself, for all the practical purposes of life, adopt the standard of the King Eternal; and the value which he attached to the subject may be seen in the price which he paid,—“Who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

XII.

THE APOSTLE AND HIGH PRIEST OF OUR
PROFESSION.

“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”—HEB. iii. 1.

ALTHOUGH this verse is part of an extended argument, it may, without injury, be isolated and considered as an independent whole. We may safely and profitably confine our view for the time to the properties of a single ring, although, in point of fact, it is a link in the middle of a chain. We shall accordingly pass over the external relations of the text, though they are intimate and interesting, in order that we may examine more fully its actual contents. These are:—

1. The agents: who are exhorted—“Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.”

2. The object: whom they are exhorted to regard—“The Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”

3. The act: how they ought to regard him—“Consider him.”

These three do not demand each an equal amount of attention. The burden of the exposition lies on the second head,—the object of regard; and to it the others must be made subordinate. The second is the main theme; the first will serve as an introduction, and the third will as-

sume the form of a practical lesson at the close. The first will point forward, and the last will point backward, and both to Jesus—"Jesus in the midst."

I. *The agents.* Who are exhorted to consider Christ? The "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling."

"Holy brethren." The terms define sufficiently the class of persons to whom this exhortation is directly addressed. It is a word, not for those who are without, but for those who are within. The direct and specific aim is not to convert, but to edify. Indirectly, the word spoken for instruction to the living may, by the ministry of the Spirit, become the means of quickening the dead; as the word designed for the conviction of sinners may be precious for reproof and instruction to saints; but it is, notwithstanding, an important practical rule in the ministry of the gospel, to divide rightly the word of truth between the world and the Church. The apostles were not deterred from addressing an assembly specifically as Christians, by the suspicion or the knowledge that some of the company had no right to their name. If we should lay it down as a rule, that we would not address an assembly as Christians, until we were sure that none but Christians were in it, we should never begin such an address until all need for it were past. We would not do that work on earth; and we need not do it in heaven. We should not, on the one hand, deprive the careless of the needful convicting reproof, by addressing all to those who are already Christ's; neither should we, on the other hand, deprive the children of the portion which the

Father sends, by speaking all, and always, for the conviction of sinners. This we ought to do, and that we ought not to leave undone. The appellation, "holy brethren," does not give a certificate of regeneration to every person included in any Christian assembly. It is the will of the Lord to cherish his own in every community, although strangers mingling among the children should unwarrantably appropriate the children's portion, and thereby more deeply deceive themselves. We must be like our Father in heaven who brings the precious grain to maturity by his shining sun, although nettles and thistles ripen also in its rays.

The two terms are interesting separately, and in their union. If they do not certify what all the worshippers are, they certainly declare what each ought to be. You may detect here the twofold division of duty, which from its fountain in the decalogue flows down, and penetrates all the moral teaching of the Scriptures. These are the first and second tables of the law, as they appear when transferred to the soft, yet retentive leaves of a renewed heart. Christians get both the first and the second commandments printed on their life. They love the Lord with all their heart, and their neighbour as themselves. They are "holy" to God, and "brethren" to men.

Further, they are "partakers of the heavenly calling." The calling is *from* heaven, and *to* heaven. It comes from above, and invites them thither. It is not of the earth in its origin, or its character. Hence, if Christians are like their calling, they are strangers and pilgrims here. They are sons of a king in exile. Although wanderers

in a desert, they are expectants of a throne. Their prospects give a tone to their conversation, and even a grace to their gait. They walk about on earth, as those who are born from above. Their name is Christian; their pattern, Christ. Their calling is heavenly, and their character too.

Such, in some measure, are all the disciples of Jesus; such in perfection they all long to be.

II. *The object.* Whom should the holy brethren regard? "The Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus."

"Our profession" is the religious system which we adopt,—the confession which we make and maintain. It indicates profession to God,* and confession one with another. We hold the truth, and we hold it together. We hold to God by faith, and to our brethren in love. It is the confession of the truth in union with all the true.

Our profession is the worship of God, and not idolatry. Then, as now, the bulk of the world was idolatrous. Men made in God's image worshipped the work of their own hands. They were mad upon their idols; they loved stocks and stones with an intoxicated, delirious love. Man has an instinct for worship. Its extinction, whether in a community or in a person, indicates not only a want of grace, but also a perversion of nature. The worship of a dead idol is a contrivance by which a man may gratify the instincts of his spiritual being without crucifying his sin,—by which he may worship

according to the original appetite of his nature, and yet sin according to the prompting of a depraved will. To all indulged lusts, even in his own children, our God is a consuming fire; therefore idolaters take a cold image to their hearts, that their own cherished sins may not become within their bosoms the fuel of a torment before the time.

Our profession is truth revealed by the Spirit of God, not discovered by the reason of men. A certain amount of truth about God may be discovered from his works by human intellect; and some men constitute the exercise into a species of worship, apart from the written word and the ministry of the Spirit. But, at the best, these are only lunar rays. There is no burning in them to consume lusts,—no light in them to ripen graces. We take revealed truth as our guide to the knowledge of God; and when we know him in Christ, we can rejoice in all his works.

Our profession is the Christian's trust in a Saviour already come, and not the Jewish expectation of another coming. It is not the truth in type and shadow, but the truth himself unveiled—God manifest in the flesh. Our profession, finally, is not self-righteousness, but faith. It is not what I am able to do, but what God is willing to give. Our plea is, not that our sins are small, but that our Saviour is great. "By grace are ye saved through faith."

Of this profession, the Apostle and High Priest is Christ Jesus. Either office is important in itself; and the union of both in the person of the Lord Jesus has a distinct and peculiar importance of its own.

An apostle is one sent out. Missionary, with which we have become so familiar in our days, is the same word in another language. The one is Greek, and the other Latin, but both mean the same thing. An apostle is a missionary, and a missionary is an apostle. In these days, which are certainly not "without partiality and without hypocrisy," it is important to assert and vindicate the identity of these two, in order to check the artificial elevation of the one and depression of the other, which is at variance alike with Scripture and common sense.

An inexpressible dignity is connected with the mission of this Apostle. The sender, the sent, and the errand, are all great. The Father sent the Son into the world; the Son, sent by the Father, came forth a missionary from heaven to earth; the design of his coming is to seek and save the lost. All our missions are copies of this great original. When, ourselves in the light, we organize and send out a mission to a people who sit in darkness, we are endeavouring to be merciful to miserable men as our Father in heaven has already been merciful to us. Our missions will shine in the darkness, in proportion as they are reflections thrown off from his.

He is High Priest too. It is his office to go into the holiest with atoning blood, and there plead for the rebellious. With his own blood our High Priest has entered into the heavens, where he ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Right in front of us and very near, a thick veil stretches all the way across between time and eternity.

No hand from without can lay its folds open ; no ray from within ever shines through. An anxious inquirer may strain a lifetime in that direction, but his weary eye will never be refreshed by one glimpse of "the things that are unseen and eternal." What lies beyond that veil ? and what welcome will our spirits get when through the portals of the grave they are summoned in ? To these questions no answer comes. Only the echo of our own voice resounds from the dread partition wall to mock our ears. God is within, and man is without ; we know this, and of ourselves we know no more. What it may be to fall into his hands we know not, for none have come back to tell. Among guilty creatures waiting their time without, there is nothing but "a fearful looking for of judgment."

Is there not, among all the principalities and powers of the unseen world, one who will bring out the mind of God to us, and bear back our case to him ? Is there none who may be sent forth, apostle from that unknown to tell its secrets, and return high priest to win favour for us at the throne of God ? Yes. In the fulness of time, and in accordance with prophetic promise, the veil rends, and the Son of God comes forth, an Apostle to publish glad tidings in this outer world. Having accomplished his mission as Prophet, he gave himself the just for the unjust, and entered the holiest again as High Priest with his own blood, to be our advocate with the Father.

In his own personal ministry he was first Apostle and then High Priest. In the order of time his mission as God's representative sent out to us was first accomplished,

and thereafter his mission as our representative sent in to God. Throughout his personal ministry in the body he acted as Apostle ; at his death, and resurrection, and ascension, he became High Priest. As Messenger of the covenant he taught the way of life ; by his atoning death and triumphant resurrection he opened that way to men. That God might have an advocate with us, he came into the world the Apostle of our profession ; that we might have an advocate with God, he ascended into heaven the High Priest of our profession. He came forth from heaven to make known God's mercy ; he returned thither to be our righteousness and present our plea.

From Jesus in the midst both an apostleship and a priesthood, instrumental and subordinate, flow upward to the first of time, and downward to the last ; as the sun, before his rising, sends out rays to constitute the dawn, and, after his going down, still gilds the evening sky. From the beginning of time to the incarnation, prophets were Christ's substitute-apostles, acting during his absence and in his name ; priests in the same period offered those typical sacrifices which bridged the chasm of ages, and carried the faith of patriarchs over to fasten for life on the divine atonement, offered once for all on Calvary. His coming, in both these offices, was like the morning. The light of the Justifier shone more and more unto the perfect day, when he dwelt among us and we beheld his glory. Clearer and more clear the shining was from the first rays that mingled with the midnight of the fall, down through all the dispensations, until his own appearing in the fulness of time. His apostleship

by substitute began at the gate of Eden ; his priesthood was exercised in type when the blood of Abel's lamb was shed.

When Jesus as our High Priest passed into the heavens, his personal ministry as our apostle ceased ; but he has not left himself without a witness. He has left that work to his servants. He prescribed their task, and promised them aid : " Preach the gospel unto every creature ; and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world." One sun shines in heaven ; the sea, in all its length and breadth, lies spread beneath it. How many ripples stand at one moment on a hemisphere of the ocean's surface ? No imagination can conceive the number, and yet a sun glances on the edge of every wave. How many leaves are trembling in the forest after a summer shower ? Yet that one celestial sun reduplicates itself in each and all. So, while Christ alone is the apostle who makes mercy known to men, a multitude, whom no man can number, publish the same salvation. Christ, the messenger of mercy, shining on uplifted, receptive hearts, imprints his own likeness on his people, manifold as the waves or leaves that glance in the sun of summer. Not only every preacher, but every believer of the word is an apostle, charged and qualified to make it known. When he ascended he left on earth a multitudinous ministry. Nor is divine commission wanting to the meanest : " Let him that heareth say, Come." Every face that is " turned to the Lord " shines more or less brightly in his blessed light. Epistles of Jesus Christ are the best apostles. The more legibly they are written,

and the less they are blotted by conformity to the world, the more effectually will their evidence propagate the faith.

In a similar manner the intercession of the High Priest in heaven is reduplicated on the earth. "Brethren, pray for us," expresses the true instinct of the new creature in a time of need. Those who, under Christ and in his name, intercede for men, are a more numerous band than even the apostles who bear witness of his salvation. All who preach in any form to men also pray for them; and, besides these, a great number of the Lord's little ones, who lack courage or skill to speak a word for Christ, speak in secret to him, for their neighbours and for the world.

In view of both these offices, he said to his disciples, "It is expedient for you that I go away." His ascension into heaven spreads both the apostleship and the priesthood over the world. In contact with the earth's surface the sun would be only a consuming fire; from the height of heaven it sheds down light and heat on every land. So Christ, after the days of his humiliation were done, was a "Light inaccessible and full of glory." Under a momentary glimpse of that light, permitted to pass through the veil after the ascension, the disciple who had familiarly lain on Jesus' bosom in the days of his flesh "fell at his feet as dead." Well might we entreat that the voice should not be so spoken—the light not so shown to us any more. The arrangement of the covenant is best. He has entered his people's forerunner within the veil, and there will remain until, through the ministry of the Spirit, the kingdoms of the world shall become his own.

Disciples in the body lie towards him, and shine in his light. Thus they become apostles to witness his goodness, and priests to intercede for more.

III. *The Act.* How the holy brethren should regard Christ. "Consider him."

The term is different from that which is also rendered "consider" in chapter xii. 3 of this epistle. Both terms signify to consider; and yet they are not in meaning precisely the same. In xii. 3, the idea is: Compare one thing with another, calculate and cast up the result. From heaven God looks down upon the children of men, and beholds them absorbed with their gains, neglecting the great salvation. They are eagerly summing up their columns of profit and loss, without a thought about the loss of their own souls, or the need of a Saviour. The Spirit by that word points to Jesus, and invites these calculators to estimate his worth. The warning is on our part needful,—on God's part kind.

In our text, although the end is very similar, it is reached by a different way. The precept here is: Observe the Apostle and High Priest of your profession; look in that direction; fix your attention on the missionary who has brought out intelligence that God is merciful, and has gone in to be our advocate and our righteousness at the throne of judgment when our case is called. It is implied that Christ has come and called; that he is waiting for an answer; that men permit him to stretch out his hands all day in vain; that they are gazing on vain shows; and that they have not so much as noticed

his presence or heard his voice. To these, as they gaze with all their faculties absorbed on the mirth of fools, going up like the flame of crackling thorns, the word comes yet once more; and its reasonable demand is: Turn round, turn from these vanities, and look unto Jesus. He is the Light of the world, and the Light is the Life of men. "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Consider him the Apostle. Well we may. When the heavens must open, and a messenger come forth bearing the mind of God to men, we have cause to rejoice that the mission is intrusted to a partaker of our nature. It was necessary that we should meet God; to make the meeting easy,—to make the meeting possible, God became man and dwelt among us. Consider Him who has brought out the message, for he is "gentle and easy to be entreated." Those who allow their minds to be blinded by the hardness of their hearts, vainly imagine that they would have attended to the messenger if he had come from heaven in flaming fire, in sight of a wondering world. "Show us a sign from heaven," they said, "and we will believe." Not knowing God, they cannot know themselves. Our Apostle's coming was like dew on the mown grass. He came a babe in Bethlehem. For authority He who is sent must be divine; but in tenderness to us, divinity at the place of contact, was pointed with humanity in its gentlest form. He clothed himself with our nature, that we might look upon him and live; he knows well, and he warns us faithfully, that he will come in another fashion on another errand, and then every eye shall see him.

Although the Apostle has departed, he has left his message in the word ; and by his own gracious appointment, "great is the company of them that publish it."

Consider him the High Priest. He is before the throne, charging himself with all the interests of his people. Consider him; he has power with God and pity for man. When a greatly-grieving, dimly-seeing, feebly-believing father had found Jesus, and was leading him in haste and hope to the bedside of his dying child, some officious members of his family came out to meet him with the sad intimation, "Thy daughter is dead," and the foolish advice, "Trouble not the master." Little did they know the power or the love of Jesus. He is the Resurrection and the Life: trouble him even for the dead. It is the delight of the Intercessor to have his hands full of work. When the priest within the temple sent the sweet incense up, the whole multitude of the people prayed without. The Hebrew worshippers, who clustered like bees in the outer courts, were encouraged to send up their requests to heaven, when they learned by a signal that the type of Messiah's intercession was ascending within the sanctuary made by hands. They will rise up in the judgment to condemn us, if, knowing that our High Priest has entered in our nature into the holiest, we do not from the outer court send up our supplications with strong crying and tears.

As Priest, he is in the heavens listening for our message, that he may present it in his own merits to the Father. While he is bowing down his ear to receive your requests, do you send in few or none? If we had

no advocate in our nature with the Father, we would think and say that the want of hope prevented prayer. Having such an High Priest to present our case, let us put our case with godly simplicity and filial confidence into his hands. Consider Him who is our High Priest, and so be encouraged to send many supplications in. Send in requests for yourself, that your sin may be blotted out, and your heart renewed; that your faith may be living and your hope bright; that your life may be his epistle, and your death his praise: for your family, that those who are bound so closely to you, may be more closely bound to him; that you and yours may be heirs together of the grace of life, and dwell together with the Lord: for the city, that its Christians may be more like Christ, and its dead masses shaken, and brought together, and clothed with skin, and raised to life, like the bones of Ezekiel's valley: for the world, that its tumults may be hushed at last, as the stormy sea became calm at the command of Jesus; that all tongues and peoples may learn on earth the common hymn of heaven, "Worthy the Lamb that died." Having such an High Priest in the heavens, why should we, by restraining prayer, leave him, as far as we are concerned, standing there all the day idle?

XIII.

GOD'S LOUD CALL TO A SLEEPING WORLD.

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."—JER. xxii. 29.

ON our rugged and water-worn shores you may often see a black wall of stone, as regular as if it had been built by human hands, running across the tide-mark from the terrestrial vegetation down to the lip of the water at its lowest. It is a trap dyke, forced up when its matter was molten, through a fissure in the overlying strata, and appearing now a narrow band of rock, totally distinct both in colour and in kind from the surrounding surface. These protruding portions show that the material of which they consist lies in vast masses underneath.

So the thin line of our text seems to protrude above a broad field of mingled prophecy and fact. It is a narrow band of unique material running athwart a surface of common, hard, rugged Jewish life in the later and corrupter period of the commonwealth. But this outburst of divine compassion, making its way through the provocations of Israel, shows that divine compassion, in measure infinite, is flowing underneath; while the surface of the Scriptures is necessarily almost all occupied with histories and doctrines, prophecies and ordinances, these tender, eager, burning outbreaks traverse the whole field in every direction. Whithersoever we turn, some well-defined example crosses our path and arrests our attention.

They lie thickest and stand highest on the track of Jesus, while he exercised his ministry in the world. See, for instance, the mass of love, cooled and congealed now to last all time, that welled at first liquid and warm from its fountain in Emmanuel's breast : " O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not !" (Matt. xxiii. 37.) Who shall measure the compassion out of which that strong cry was projected ? These specimens are thrown up and left outstanding, evidence of infinite love beneath. The pages of the Bible and the present experience of men constitute a superficial crust, conglomerate of various materials, but all lying over unfathomable depths of mercy. Whether thou art reading the Bible or labouring for daily bread, " the place where thou standest is holy ground." In him we live, and move, and have our being ; and he is love.

The *manner* of this cry conveys a reproof to men ; and Its *matter* displays the mercy of God.

I. The *manner* of this cry. In form it is obviously and intensely peculiar. When the awakener utters such a piercing cry, you may conclude that the sleep of the sleeper is deep. You may measure the danger which a monitor apprehends by the sharpness of the alarm which he gives. This is such a call as the compassionate angel may have addressed to Lot and his family, lingering among their stuff, when the day of Sodom's doom was already dawning over the mountains of Moab. The two elements, multiplied into each other, which swell into a peal so loud,

are the mercy that glows in the warner's breast, and the danger to which the sleeper lies exposed. In the mercy of God and the misery of men, both elements stand at the highest point, and the result accordingly is the loudest, keenest call, that can be addressed to human ears : " O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."

The earth itself, and all the creatures on it under man, have a quick ear for their Maker's voice, and, never needing, never get a call so urgent. The alacrity of the creatures that lie either above or beneath him in the scale of creation brings out in higher relief the disobedience of man.

Physically, earth is wide awake and watchful. It courses through the heavens without halting for rest, and threads its way among other stars without collision. With equal constancy it spins round upon itself, causing the day to chase the night, and the night to chase the day across all time, as wave chases wave across the ocean. The tide keeps its time and place. The rivers roll toward the sea, and the clouds fly on wings like eagles, hastening to pour their burdens into the rivers' spring-heads, that though ever flowing they may be ever full. The earth is a diligent worker; it is not the sluggard who needs a three-fold call to awake and begin. Equally alert are the various orders of life that crowd the world's surface. It is when in the ascending scale of creation you come to man that you first find a breach of order. "Hear, O heavens; and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have

rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib : but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider" (Isa. i. 2, 3).

Above our own place, too, angel spirits are like flames of fire in the quickness, and like stormy winds in the power, with which they serve their Maker. The cry of this text is meant for man ; he needs it, and he only.

On a superficial consideration of the subject, you might suppose that the criminal whose guilt is greatest and most easily proved, would be the first to hear the approaching footsteps of the judge ; but a more exact inquiry into the facts and laws of the case reveals the terrible truth that sin, in proportion to its amount, makes its subject insensible of danger. Guessing results in the absence of experience, we would be ready to say, the greater the cold to which a man is exposed the less will be his tendency to sleep. In point of fact the law is the reverse of that supposition. When the polar winter threatens to freeze the navigator's blood, rendering constant and violent exercise necessary to keep the currents moving, then it is that the men feel the greatest drowsiness. It is only by the vigilance of experienced chiefs that they are prevented from sinking into a sleep from which there is no awakening. This fact, and the law which rules it, constitute in the moral region the saddest feature in the condition of the world. They sleep most soundly who have most need to be wakeful. The cold which is ready to congeal life in its fountains, arrests the activity which is necessary to preserve life. The serpent charms into stillness the bird that he is about to devour.

The guilt which brings upon a man God's displeasure, so stupifies the senses of the man, that he is not aware of danger, and does not try to escape.

The mystery of God's mercy to man is, we know, one thing into which unfallen angels desire to look; the mystery of man's heedlessness of God must be another. Angels, our elder brothers, must wonder both at our deep sleep, and at God's long, loud awakening cry. Both mysteries lie beyond their view.

The spiritual awakening which has lately visited portions both of America and of our own land, in connection with the interest which it has excited, bears incidental but emphatic testimony to the deafness of a slumbering world. Among the millions of the population a few thousands have started up, and begun to cry, What must we do to be saved? Among the millions who make this world their portion, a few thousands have begun to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Among the millions who are living in miscellaneous wickedness, a few thousands, weary of sin, are walking with Christ in newness of life. At this phenomenon the whole world wonders. Some speak against it as evil; many rejoice in it as good; and many are unable to form a judgment or take a side; but all are amazed. Alas, that the spectacle is so rare! If conversions were more frequent they would not be noticed so much. A rocket which would arrest a thousand eyes if it arose red into the air over the city at midnight, might rise and fall unseen by day. The crowd that gathers to gaze on sparks of light is evidence enough that the sun is beneath the horizon.

We wonder now when any awake at God's call, and seek his mercy ; may the time soon come when we shall wonder if any do not.

II. The *matter* of this cry.

1. The speaker,—*the Lord*.
2. The thing spoken,—*the word* of the Lord.
3. The injunction to regard it,—*hear* the word of the Lord.

1. The speaker is the only living and true God. It is essential that our belief in the first principle of religion should be well-defined and real. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. xi. 6). Religion may be faint and feckless, for want of a foundation in an actual belief that God is. I am well aware that abstract demonstrations regarding the being and attributes of God are not suitable as first lessons in religion for savages or children. Explain first that part of the building which experience shows to be most easily apprehended, but the learner must as soon as possible come to know what the foundation is on which the whole structure stands. I do not prescribe the order of a Christian education, but the Christian education is fatally defective which does not leave upon the mind and conscience a practical sense of God's being and presence, as the first principle of all truth and all duty. Sarah's Egyptian handmaid, driven from home by her own high spirit, and the high look of her mistress, wandering in the desert alone, helpless when human help is needed most, was better grounded in true

religion than many who enjoy more light. Oh, for more of Hagar's short but pregnant creed, the genuine utterance of a lone woman's heart, "Thou, God, seest me."

2. The thing spoken is the Word of the Lord. It is not enough for us that God is near. He was not far from the men of Athens in the days of Paul, and yet he was to them "the unknown God." He has broken the silence; he has revealed his will. The word of the Lord lies in the Scriptures. There the Creator and the creature meet and converse. How precious is the record of the interview! Its enemies seem to know its worth better than some of its friends. The zeal of Protestants to get the Bible brought into human hearts and homes, does not favourably compare with the zeal of Romanists to keep it out. A free Bible is the symptom and the cause of true freedom in any land. "They are freemen whom the truth makes free, and all are slaves beside."

The word of the Lord in the Scriptures is Mercy. If the message brought only vengeance, we could at least understand the voluntary deafness of the world. But it is strange that men will not listen to their best friend; strange that the lost should shut their ears against a voice which publishes salvation. In the Scriptures, alternating with the whispers of mercy, the thunders of judgment resound. The terrors of the Lord are as thickly strewn on the surface of the word as his invitations; but it would be an inexcusable and fatal misreading of the Spirit's mind to combine these two, so that they should neutralize each other, and leave upon a human heart the vague impression that there is in the Bible about as

much to drive us back as to draw us near. There are in the word kind, encouraging invitations ; so far, you will acknowledge. But there are also many stern denunciations, and those you think greatly modify the mercy of other parts. No ; these greatly enhance the mercy of other parts. These are the crowning marks of mercy. A shepherd, foreseeing a snow-storm that will drift deep in the hollows of the hill, where the silly sheep seeking refuge would find a grave, prepares shelter in a safe¹ spot, and opens its door. Then he sends his dog after the wandering flock to frighten them into the fold. The bark of the dog behind them is a terror to the timid sheep ; but it is at once the sure means of their safety, and the mark of the shepherd's care. Without it the prepared fold and the open entrance might have proved of no avail. The terror which the shepherd sent into the flock gave the finishing touch to his tender care, and effect to all that had gone before it. Such precisely in design and effect are the terrible things of God's word ; not one of them indicates that he is unwilling to receive sinners. They are the overflowings of divine compassion. They are sent by the good Shepherd to surround triflers on the brink of perdition, and compel them to come into the provided refuge ere its door be shut. The terrors of the Lord are not the salvation of men ; but they have driven many to the Saviour. No part of the Bible could be wanted ; a man shall live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

Still further, and more particularly, "the word of the Lord" is Christ. "God, who at sundry times, and in

divers manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. i. 1, 2). "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth" (John i. 1, 14). "The word of God is living, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 12, 13).

The use of the Scriptures is to reveal Christ; if we reject him, they cannot give us life.

3. The injunction to regard that Word, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord." The eternal Word has come into the world to show us the Father: "Hear ye him."

Saul of Tarsus handled the Scriptures much as a Pharisee and doctor of the law; but the letter, in his hands dead, did not give him life. Christ the life of men, whom the Scriptures held, and held forth, he had hitherto resisted. At last, on the journey to Damascus, that Word compassing him about like air, and shining in his face with a light above the brightness of the sun, cast him to the ground, entered his heart, and took possession of its throne. "Who art thou, Lord?" said the astonished cap-

tive, and surrendered without conditions. That rock rent, that grave gave up its dead at the dying of the Lord Jesus. Earth then, in its hardest, deafest bit, heard the word of the Lord.

At the present day not a few of the sleepers are hearing the voice of the Son of God and coming forth, seeming in their sudden resurrection, both to themselves and their neighbours, as strange as Lazarus in his grave-clothes standing in the sun-light. Out of a cave as dark, and from a death as deep, many have come of late at the call of the same Jesus.

Several aspects of this shrill warning cry remain for consideration, each containing a practical lesson for our time and place.

1. The earth so summoned, has already, in a sense most interesting and important, heard the word of the Lord. Christ's kingdom is even now more powerful on the earth than any other kingdom. The Christian nations, so called, rule the world; and the true Christianity which they contain is the source of the power which they wield. Government, commerce, and science, are secondary and subordinate to the moral element which revealed truth contains and supplies. The power that lives in the conscience and links itself to God is, in point of fact, the most persistent and effective of all the powers which mould the character and history of the human race. It is great, is growing greater, and will yet be supreme.

2. The earth through all its bounds will one day hear and obey the word of the Lord. Saving truth lying in the hearts of saved men has a self-propagating power.

The kingdom of God within its subjects is like leaven hid in the meal. Already it has penetrated far into the mass. The mission of the gospel among the nations is, "Overturn, overturn, overturn, until He come whose right it is" (Ezek. xxi. 27). The earth, in our day, is fast falling into the hands of those who have the word of God, and permit it to circulate among the people as freely as the air of heaven. When the preparatory providences have run their course,—when the sixth long day's work is done, and the seventh angel has sounded, great voices will be heard in heaven, and their burden will be the anthem of a millennial Sabbath: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ" (Rev. xi. 15).

3. When the earth hears its Lord's word, forthwith it calls upon the Lord. They who do not hear cannot speak. The deafness is the cause of the dumbness. Those who do not hear what God says to them, have nothing to say to God. As with an individual, so with the earth at large,—when it ceases to be deaf, it ceases also to be dumb. As soon as it hears, it begins to speak. As soon as a voice from heaven touches the earth, an echo answers up from earth to heaven. Those who sail in air-ships among the clouds, as others sail on the sea, tell us that every cry which they utter on high is answered by an echo from the earth beneath. When the earth, spiritually susceptible, receives from heaven the sound, "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord," another cry forthwith arises, "O heaven, heaven, heaven, hear the petition of sinful men upon the earth." God delights in that cry. He loves it as it rises, the

reduplication of his own. God speaks to us by preaching ; we speak to him in prayer. When preaching is not followed by praying, he counts that his word has been wasted in the air, and never reached its destination. Prayer ascending is evidence to him that his word has touched and told on human hearts. When the Atlantic telegraph was laid, and the two extremities of one iron line were made fast to the shores of opposite and far separated continents, a path seemed open for the reciprocal interchange of sentiment between the old world and the new. Great was the disappointment when a message sent from this side called no response from the other. The absence of the answer showed that the message had not reached. Some fatal fault affects the channel on its passage through the severing sea. So, when no prayer comes up to heaven in answer to his call, God counts that the earth has not heard his word. Be assured, brother, when he speaks to us, he means that we should speak to him.

4. Earth—that is, men in the body—should hear the word of the Lord, for to them it brings a message of mercy. There may be open ears, when the winning words are done. Hear him, earth ; hell will hear without such urgent exhortations, but will hear no welcome voice. Now is the accepted time ; this is the place of hope.

Steamships, not a few of late years, teeming with human life, have left one shore of the Atlantic and never reached the other. Although no messenger escaped with tidings, their fate is now known too well. The huge

mass is rushing through the waters at midnight with the speed of a horseman who bears the news of battle to his chief, when it stops and rebounds with a crash like thunder, and five hundred sleepers start awake with five hundred commingling screams. They have heard—these swarming, shrieking passengers—they have heard, and awakened from their sleep at the cry, but no word of hope reaches their open, straining ears. They hear, but do not live.

O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord while he holds open the gate of life and calls on the perishing to come in. Beware lest the sound that first awakens you be the crash of the gate when it shuts!

5. Earth—the dust of the dead in Christ—shall hear the word of the Lord, and shall come forth. At the mouth of a grave where a dead brother lay, Jesus said to the sorrowing survivors, “I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.” Oh for the blessed hope of immortality, burning bright within a disciple’s heart, and shining through his countenance! The resurrection of the dead is a precious, present truth. “Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief.” This body for which Christ died, and for which he now lives and reigns,—this body, when it is dust, shall hear his voice, and come forth glorious like his own.

Not hewn stone, and carved cedar, and beaten gold, but earth is the temple in which God gets true worship, and loves to dwell. Partially now, perfectly soon, the body of a believer is a consecrated temple of the living

God. To believe, to know, to feel this, would do two things for me : With such faith I would not admit the unclean into this temple, for Jesus has bought and claims it as his own ; with such faith I would not, when the time comes, and the messenger approaches, be frightened to let this temple be taken down, for God will raise it up again. It is his, and none shall be able to take it, or keep it, out of his hands.

XIV.

WILLING TO WAIT, BUT READY TO GO.

“For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better: nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.”—PHIL. i. 23, 24.

- I. The two desires.
- II. A Christian balanced evenly between them.
- III. Practical lessons.

I. The two desires are, 1. To depart and to be with Christ; and, 2. To abide in the flesh.

1. To depart and to be with Christ. This desire is composed of two parts,—a vestibule, somewhat dark and forbidding, through which the pilgrim must pass; and a temple, unspeakably glorious, to which it leads the pilgrim, as his eternal home.

(1.) The exodus from this life by dissolution of the body—“to depart.”

(2.) Christ’s presence the immediate portion of his people, when their life on earth is done—“to be with Christ.”

(1.) The exodus. The word which in our Bible is translated “depart,” means strictly to take to pieces. The living man is contemplated as a complex machine, and it is intimated that at death its joints are loosed, and the whole is broken up into its constituent elements. This life

in the body is like a watch. By food, and drink, and air, it is wound up daily, and so kept going. At last the machinery, by gradual wear and tear, or by some sudden accident, is brought to a stand. Then it is taken down—taken to pieces—in order that it may be purified and perfected, and set agoing again, not to measure then the changing seasons of time, but to move on, without waste or weariness, in a limitless eternity.

More immediately, the dissolution or untying probably refers to the separation of soul and body. The band that knit them together is broken at death. The soul escapes, and the body, meantime, returns to dust. In this view the works of the watch never stand still. When life from God was first breathed into that immortal being, it was wound up, once for all, to go for ever. At the shock of death it is severed from its case of flesh. Outer casement, and figured dial, and pointed hands, all remain with us, and all stand still. But these never were the moving springs. These were shells to protect the tender from injury where the road was rough, and indices to make the movements palpable to bodily sense; but the vital motion of the departed spirit continues uninterrupted, unimpeded, in a region where no violence is dreaded, and no sign to the senses is required.

You may observe, both in the Scriptures, and in the actual history of Christians now, that lively faith is inventive and skilful, in turning the flank of the last enemy, and avoiding the terrors that frown from his front. They do not allow their view to terminate in the dark grave. They must look, they must move towards the grave; but

they look, at the same time, beyond it. They contrive so to lean on the resurrection, as to take away the terror of death. They are ingenious in discovering softer names for that which is so harsh in nature. For them its character has been changed, and why should they not apply to it a new designation? When Jews or Gentiles in those early days were converted to Christ, they received new names to indicate and commemorate their conversion. Paul became the Christian name of Saul the persecutor. It was meet that when the waster of the Church became the gentle nurse who cherished her, the name which was so deeply dyed in blood should be allowed to drop, and another adopted which would be fragrant with associations of faith, and love, and holiness. So when death, king of terrors to the guilty, becomes stingless and harmless to the forgiven, he gets from them a new name corresponding to his new nature. Death has several Christian names. Sometimes it is called Sleep, sometimes Departure; sometimes the untying of the knot, that the immortal spirit may go free. The appellations are various, but they all indicate that, from the standing-place of them that are "in Christ Jesus," advancing death seems more a friend than a foe.

(2.) The company to which that exodus directly leads,—"to be with Christ." It is obvious, and needs no proof, that Paul counted on immediate entrance at the untying of the knot into the joy of the Lord. He knew of no middle state of detention and purgation, either for himself or for disciples who might not be so ripe at the moment of their fall. Whatever and wherever the place

of saved spirits may be while their bodies lie in the dust, one thing is certain, Christ is there. "The love of the Spirit" has made that one point plain, and Christians need not care for more. Mark here how well suited these promises are to our capacity and our need. Of the three points regarding the condition of separate spirits, on which information might be thought possible or desirable, Where, What, and with Whom, the Scriptures deal only with the last. It is well. Information given to us about the locality in space where departed spirits dwell, or the kind of habitation provided for them there, might be in itself true; but it would obviously be useless to us, because we lack the faculties and the experience necessary to understand it. Witness the inconsistent, childish, and grotesque legends of Mohammedans and Hindoos regarding the position of their paradise, and the material riches which it contains. In vivid contrast with those vain and vile deceptions, the Bible makes no attempt to fix the spot or describe the appearance of the saints' inheritance. One thing only it tells Christians about the state in which the spirits of the just shall dwell,—they shall be with Christ there. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

A law, however pure and perfect, cannot be company to a person. A thing, though it were the brightest bit of God's universe, or that universe itself, could not make a person happy. Persons will be miserable, although they possess all power and all wisdom, unless they have kindred persons with whom they may hold fellowship. What is a man profited, although he should gain a

glorious heaven, if his human affections are lost for want of a human being to exercise them on. Even true believers lag far behind in this department of duty and privilege. In this direction there is room for great advancement. The pleasure and profit which we derive from human society on earth is a matter of experience; greater pleasure and profit await the saved from human society in heaven: if there were faith to realize the unseen, the hope of the greater in prospect would overbalance the less which we already hold in our hands. All the good which we enjoy from the society of our kind during a whole life-time, is not worthy to be compared with the blessedness of having the man Christ Jesus for company, where no sin mars the intercourse, and no duration brings it nearer to a close. Take human companionship in the purest, sweetest form that our experience in the body supplies, divest it absolutely of all alloy, magnify it by all the value of our Brother's divine nature, and extend it to eternity. Such is the company that Christians expect. Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, heart cannot conceive how precious it is. Here is a mine, not much wrought now, where the martyrs found those riches of grace which we admire in their history, and where the poor may dig at will to-day.

“Looking unto Jesus” is the act by which Christians contrive to gild with blessed hope the horizon of life's setting day. Intervening clouds, which seem murky from another stand-point, glitter all in gold when the observer is so situated that he sees the sun beyond them.

2. “To abide in the flesh.” It is a natural and a

lawful desire. God has placed us here ; he has visited us here ; he has given us something to enjoy and something to do here. He expects us to value what he has bestowed. Jesus, in his prayer to the Father for those whom he had redeemed, puts in a specific caveat : " I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world." What Christ did not desire for Christians, they should not desire for themselves. Paul, even when he was ripe for glory, positively desired to abide in the flesh ; they are the healthiest Christians who in this matter tread in his track.

This is a point of great practical importance in the experience of believers. On the one hand, some rebelliously cling to this life without respect to the will of our Father in heaven. A purpose is secretly cherished, determined in its nature, although impotent in effect, " to abide in the flesh " and enjoy it, whether God will or will not. On the other hand, true disciples are often troubled without cause, by detecting in themselves during periods of severe illness a distinct, positive desire for longer days. They sometimes expend much needless labour in trying to crucify an affection which is not a sin. The love of life !—it is not necessary, it is not lawful to destroy it. Let it alone to the last. The way to deal with it is not to tear it violently out, so as to have, or say that you have, no desire to remain ; but to get, through the grace of the Spirit, such a blessed hope of Christ's presence as will gradually balance, and at last overbalance the love of life, and make it at the appointed time come easily and gently away.

Such were the two opposite desires that lived together in a believer's breast ; let us consider now the weights with which each is loaded, so as to maintain a safe and easy equipoise.

II. A Christian balanced evenly between these two desires : " I am in a strait betwixt two." From the word strait employed in our translation we are apt to take up the notion of pain and difficulty. This is not the idea which the apostle intended to express. Literally the word signifies to be between two, and held by both at the same time. In ordinary circumstances, and in the present case especially, this is pleasanter and safer than to be held by only one. This strait is the happiest condition in which a living man can be. It is not a position of distraction from which he would fain escape, but a position of solid repose. To be grasped and drawn by either of these emotions alone would bend and break a man ; to be attracted equally by both produces a delicious equilibrium.

The spiritual fact may be explained by a material example. Suppose a man is standing aloft upon a pedestal where he finds room to plant his feet and no more. Suppose that one neighbour stands near him on the right hand, and another near him on the left. If one of these grasp and draw him, his posture immediately becomes uneasy and dangerous. Under the strain he does not keep his footing easily, and will not keep it long. But if both should grasp him, either seizing a hand, and draw with equal force in opposite directions, the result would be an erect attitude and an easy position.

Such precisely in the spiritual department is the equilibrium of a believer who is held and drawn by both these desires at once. It is the strait betwixt two that makes him easy. Either of these desires wanting the other would distress him in proportion to its strength.

On the one hand, a desire to abide in the flesh without a balancing desire to depart and to be with Christ, is a painful condition. The weight hanging on one side racks the person all over. Most men are crushed in this manner all their days. The Redeemer knows this sorrow and provides relief. One specific design of his coming was "to deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." As soon as one of these tremblers is begotten again into a living hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, the balance is restored and deliverance effected.

On the other hand, the converse is equally true, although not equally common. To experience a desire to depart, unbalanced by a desire to abide in the flesh, is also a painful experience. Many Christians pass through at least a short period of this unevenness and uneasiness before they are set free. Whatever may be the immediate causes which have made life wearisome to a Christian, whenever the desire to abide dies out, the desire to depart distracts him. It may be that most of us at present would gladly bargain for such a state of mind at the close of life, as being the safest; but it is, notwithstanding, and not the less a painful state of mind.

But besides the general intimation that he was drawn

simultaneously toward both sides, we find in this text the specific quality which on either side exerted the power; the one was "far better" for himself, the other "more needful" for his brethren. The gain which it promised to himself made the prospect of departure welcome; the opportunity of doing good to others reconciled him to longer life on earth. The desire "to be with Christ" does not make life unhappy, because it is balanced by the pleasure of working for Christ in the world; the desire to work for Christ in the world does not make the approach of dissolution painful, because it is balanced by the expectation of being soon—of being ever with the Lord.

These two, then, go to constitute the spiritual man. These are the right and left sides of the new creature in Christ. Where both grow equally, there is no halting; where both have grown well, the step is steady and the progress great.

III. Practical lessons.

1. This one text is sufficient to destroy the whole fabric of Romish prayer to departed saints. Incidentally this inspired intimation of Paul's peaceful equipoise scatters their mediatorial system like chaff before the wind. If the Popish doctrine is true, obviously Paul was fundamentally mistaken. "To depart and to be with Christ" would, in that case, have been far more needful, and more useful for his friends who might be left behind in the body. In thorough consistency with their scheme, a dead saint is a much greater affair in Rome than a living one.

A human saint already in heaven is either invested with an attribute which, in relation to this earth, is equivalent to omniscience, or he is not ; if he is not, of a thousand Papists who, in various parts of the world, may be addressing the same saint at the same moment, nine hundred and ninety-nine lose their labour, while the merely human mediator is occupied with one ; if he is, then Paul should have said to his brethren, It is far better both for you and me that I should depart and be with Christ. One only could say with truth, and in the Bible one only has said, "It is expedient for you that I go away." There is one mediator between God and men. Paul knew that by "pains" taken with them, he might do good to his brethren as long as he abode in the flesh ; but it never entered his mind that, in answer to "prayers" which they might address to him, he could do them any good after his departure.

2. The chief use of a Christian in the world is to do good. When the master sends labourers into the field to convert it into a garden, idlers only take up room, and stand in the way of the willing. Christians are in their own sphere like Christ ; it is their meat and their drink to do the will of the Father. The command of the Saviour and the inclination of the saved coincide in sending forth labourers to the Lord's harvest. He who has gotten mercy from God is and must be merciful to men. They who hope to be with Christ when they depart, should so act as that neighbours would count them needful while here, and miss them when they go.

3. You cannot be effectively useful to those who are

in need on earth, unless you hold by faith and hope to Christ on high. The man who desires to depart and to be with Christ is felt to be most needful among his brethren. Hope is the soul of successful labour. It is the man who is above the world that can do most for the world. The old philosopher knew that he could not move the earth, however potent his instruments might be, as long as he had nothing but the earth to stand upon. They who desire to move the world in its spiritual character are subjected to similar conditions. It is only when they are "not of the world" that they will have purchase on the world, or any part of it, to turn it unto God.

To labour for lost neighbours without sustaining hope in your own soul is a painful process, and comparatively ineffectual. It is like an attempt to carry water in a vessel with one hand, while the other hand is empty. You will not be able to carry much, and all the bones of your frame will be racked by the little which you carry. An equal weight on the other side will make the weight easy. It was because Paul was loaded on both sides that he stood so erect, and walked so steadily under his burden.

4. Living hope of going to be with Christ is the only anodyne which has power to neutralize the pain of parting with those who are dear to us in the body. When Paul looked upon his own children in the faith, who still greatly needed his presence, the thought of separation was in itself painful. The bond on this side was strong, the attraction on this side powerful; it was good for him that he was drawn with equal force to the other side.

Brethren, we all have tender ties to earth and time. Children it may be, or brothers, both in the flesh and in the spirit, are twined closely round our hearts. We are needful to them. This is felt on both sides now, and will be felt more tenderly when the hour of separation is drawing near. How shall that pang be softened to both parties,—to him who is departing, and to those who remain? In one way only: the desire to depart and to be with Christ will do it, and nothing else will. How good it is,—how necessary to have that hope and trust now! How dreary to be drifting down toward those dark and tempestuous narrows before the anchor of the soul has been thrown within the veil, and fastened there on Jesus!

Paul's "strait" is the only easy position on the earth; oh, to be in it! If you are held by both of these bonds you will not fear a fall on either side. Although your life, instead of being in your Father's hands, were at the disposal of your worst enemy, in his utmost effort to do you harm, he would be shut up between these two,—either to keep you a while longer in Christ's work, or send you sooner to Christ's presence. That were indeed a charmed life that should tremble evenly in the blessed balance;—this way, we shall do good to men; that way, we shall be with the Lord.

XV.

THE REDEEMER'S TEARS.

“ Jesus wept.”—JOHN xi. 35.

CHRIST is the Revelation of God, and the Scriptures are the Revelation of Christ. We need Christ as the Mediator to show us the Father, and the Spirit in the Word to show us Christ. Himself has spoken both these truths : They, the Scriptures, testify of me ; I am the way to the Father.

In this short text the Spirit gives testimony to Jesus. Here shines a glory of the Lord. It is a wonder greater than that which Moses saw in Midian. Here is sorrow without sin. Here is human weakness wedded to divine power. This is God our Saviour ; and yet this man is weeping by the grave of his dead friend. We have not yet found out all the meaning that lies in these tears. A sign from heaven did they ask ? Here it is. It marks the meeting of God and man. How dreadful is this place ! Divine power touches human weakness here, and human weakness is linked to divine power. Look unto Jesus as he weeps ; here the sinful may see God and live.

In our meditation upon this tender theme, we shall not be able to frame and follow out exact logical definitions. The various constituent elements fuse in our hands, and flow in one channel. Some distinction, however, may be made and maintained between the human

Want implied, and the divine Supply provided for it in the Redeemer's tears.

In the main, therefore, we shall consider,—

I. The ailment in man which requires as a salve the Redeemer's tears.

II. The suitableness of this specific for the ailment to which it is applied.

I. The ailment in man, which requires as a salve the tears of Jesus.

The word is sent to heal. Every part of the healing word is specifically provided for a corresponding feature of the patient's disease. The meaning of the medicine, when discovered, throws light on the symptoms of the sick ; and, reciprocally, the symptoms of the sick, when understood, go far to explain the meaning of the medicine which the great Physician has prescribed. Revealing a peculiar and distinctive feature of the remedy, the text suggests a corresponding aspect of the patient's case. Let us endeavour to find out and fix the specific human want which this divine prescription anticipates and supplies.

In the religious history of mankind errors rank under two great heads or classes. Although the spring of all evil is one, the stream that flows from it parts asunder soon. The two main constituents diverge into opposite channels. One class, believing that God is just, seek peace by hiding from his presence ; another make for themselves a god who is not terrible to sinners, and then fondly worship their own creature. Those adopt

theoretically a religion which proves difficult, and then practically live without their religion; these, having chosen an easy religion, can afford to be very religious.

These two principles are practically exemplified in the conduct respectively of those Protestants and Papists who are alike alienated from God in their hearts. What the Protestant has heard about God leaves on his mind the impression of a just judge; the unreconciled heart, knowing this, and knowing no more, answers, No God, by a life of actual atheism. The Papist, on the contrary, has been taught to reverence various idols, departed spirits in the unseen world, or pictures hanging on a wall; and these are not terrible in righteousness. Finding that to deal with them is not difficult, he deals with them much. Hence, while a Christless Protestant forgets God, and lives practically without religion, an equally Christless Papist spends much of his time in confession to priests and prayer to saints.

For both forms of the disease the Scriptures prescribe the appropriate remedies. Where the word of truth is rightly divided, there is a portion for each. Our text contains the specific, not for Papists who find their God so easy to meet, that they can meet him without apprehension in their sins, but for Protestants who find it so hard to meet their God that they avoid the meeting altogether. For the one class the word in season is the terribleness of the living and true God; for the other class the word in season is the tenderness of the one Mediator between God and man. To those who furnish themselves with false mediators we must proclaim the true God; to

those who know only to dread the true God we must make known the one Mediator.

The persons, then, who specially need this word are those who forget God, because the remembrance makes them afraid. For the sake of prodigals who will not arise and go to the Father the Redeemer's tears were shed. Jesus reveals himself by doing and suffering as well as by words. He does nothing in vain. There is meaning in every look and every sigh. He was as much "about the Father's business" when he wept beside the grave at Bethany, as when, in the last great day of the feast, he cried, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." You must look unto Jesus as well as hear him. You may learn as much of his salvation from the miracles of his power and the sufferings of his weakness as from his teaching, when he spake as never man spake. There is doctrine in his life. All his miracles teem with saving truth. All the acts of this wondrous man were wonderful. "Jesus wept;" might not this be counted a miracle too?

Come near all ye who complain that religion slips from your grasp; this is the place to hold it by. No man hath seen God at any time. "It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "His wrath makes us afraid." By the mysterious unsearchableness of the invisible God, and the awful justice of the Supreme Judge as dimly outlined in the conscience, you have, in point of fact, been all your days kept at a distance. Your religion has sometimes made itself known as a power by taking the pleasure out of time, but never by taking the terror out of eternity. The pain which re-

ligion inflicts is with you a sad reality ; but its consolations hitherto have flitted past like shadows. You may have chimed in more or less passively with the orthodox sentiment that godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come ; but your real experience has been that, though necessary for the future, it is bitter now. You have heard with your ears, "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and causest to approach unto thee" (Ps. lxxv. 4) ; and felt at the same moment in your inmost heart that nearness to God is the chief misery of man. When your spirit momentarily awakes you see nothing but the terrors of the Lord, and therefore you contrive to lie in a dormant state. When any measure of religious thoughtfulness comes on, it takes all the daylight out of your life. As this visitor uniformly proves the disturber of your peace, you instinctively and tacitly watch his approach and shut the door against him. The biography of such a Christian has been written in few words : Without God in the world.

For such a case the Redeemer's tears are a sovereign remedy.

II. The suitableness of the specific for the ailment to which it is applied. Such an High Priest became us. This is truly God with us. Jesus wept that he might get close to us, we close to him. Through that opening his compassion comes out, our confidence goes in.

I believe that religion with many in this favoured land wants life and power, because we do not make

enough of the manhood of the Mediator. We think of him as Almighty God, but we do not feel sure whether he is disposed to save or to destroy. His Godhead will, indeed, hold up for ever all who are in his favour ; but we cannot take hold of him by his Godhead. He found this want in man. The display of his omnipotence drew from Peter the distrustful cry, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." When the Church was young,—when its few disciples were like little children, he led them by the manifestation of his manhood. When for needful evidence of his mission he permitted the divinity to glance through the veil, the glory dazzled and paralyzed those little ones. The favoured three on the Mount of Transfiguration were thrown upon the ground in terror, and Peter, their spokesman, wist not what he said. When he appeared in vision after his resurrection, not only Saul his enemy, but also John, his bosom friend, "fell at his feet as dead." Such is the weakness of man; and the methods of Jesus are adapted to the case. Of the eternal Son of God we cannot lay hold ; and therefore he shows himself to us as the Son of man. He has bowed very low that he might come very near. He thirsted on the well-side ; he wept at the grave's mouth ; he cried aloud upon the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." At all these openings he manifests his manhood, that we may be encouraged and enabled to take hold of him for eternal life.

Let us examine now more particularly why Jesus wept. The cause of the fact is as wonderful and instructive as the fact itself. The scene is entirely intensely

human throughout. This is a brother born for our adversity. At Bethany dwelt a family, the intimate friends of the man Christ Jesus. He was accustomed to turn aside and rest in their house, when wearied with his walk from Jerusalem, or his work in it. In process of time the brother of that house fell sick and died. When Jesus, some days afterwards, came to Bethany, he found the surviving sisters enduring one of the sorest, yet commonest sorrows of humanity. A feeble woman stood and gazed into the ground beside her brother's grave. As he looked on the veiled statue, and saw, perhaps, a shiver of convulsive agony beneath the mourner's drapery, he knew all the grief which rent that tender heart, and felt it at his own. At the sight of her suffering he suffered ; seeing her tears falling, he wept too.

Mark, I beseech you, the commonness of the suffering which then drew forth the sympathy of Jesus. It was heavy, but it was not strange. We are too apt to conceive of the Saviour as concerned only about our souls and our sins. Thus we keep him distant. By a mistake as to the character of his sympathy, we keep the true Comforter at arm's length when our hearts most need him near. Men think of his divinity, and cry, in some way, for the pardon of their sins ; but do not realize his humanity, so as to count on his sympathy in their sorrows. Nor is this the measure of the loss ; by failing to accept the less, we sacrifice also the greater. If we do not grasp his humanity for sympathy in common grief, we cannot get hold of his Godhead for the saving of our souls.

It is the incarnation of Emmanuel that affords a point

of contact between God and man. It is in his human nature that he reaches us—that we reach him. He fed the hungry in the desert; but the bodily appetite, and its supply, he meant to use as an avenue of access for divine mercy into human spirits. He healed the ten lepers, but he complained of the ungrateful nine, that the act had not opened a way for himself into their hearts. When the paralytic lay before him, a compassion that was at once divine and human wrought in his bosom and flowed from his lips. Thy sins be forgiven thee, and, Take up thy bed and walk, clung together like the deity and manhood in Christ.

When we put him far from us, we then and thereby keep ourselves far from him. You may have observed that when you come near the mirror on the one side, the image within it approaches nearer on the other; but that as far as you retire on this side, so far the image retires on that. A similar process goes on, according to a similar law, in the intercourse between Christians and Christ. When you count him distant, you feel yourself distant; when he is near to you, you are near to him. In particular, when you feel that your Redeemer has come down through all spiritual and eternal things, in order that he may lay his human heart along yours, and share its smallest, secretest sorrows, you get very near him, not only with these sorrows which come first in contact, but also near him—into his heart, and up to his heaven, for all the treasures of his grace, and all the hopes of his glory.

To a mind outwardly instructed, but not inwardly

taught of the Spirit, God, our just judge, seems to stand at an inaccessible distance in the highest heaven. From that height Christ the mediator seems to descend on our behalf, and take up his position on an intermediate stage, half way between heaven and earth. Thence he beckons us to come, and promises to save. But though he seems nearer to us than heaven, and willing to receive us when we reach his standing-place, there is still between him and us a great gulf which we cannot pass. We have not the wings of a dove, whereon we might fly to him and be at rest. Although he engages to carry us all the way to heaven after we have climbed up to him, we cannot climb up to him, and so lie down despairing. Clogged by the body, and sticking fast in the thick clay of earthly cares, we never once get up into that region where Jesus seems to stand,—where we keep him standing.

What then? The dupes of the Romish priesthood call upon Mary and Peter, and other more doubtful saints, to come and help them over and up to Christ. As the poor shivering child stands on the gulf's brim, and sees Jesus at a hopeless distance on the other side, saints of various name and character approach, and undertake to bear the trembler over. Those who throw themselves into these outstretched arms sink through into the pit. The saint was nothing but a shadow,—the shadow of a name. But what of us who know full well that these manifold mediators are unsubstantial phantoms? What of us who intelligently demand credentials, and refuse to leap for life into the embrace of deceivers? We detect and distrust the false offer of help; but without help we

cannot lift ourselves up to a lofty, distant Saviour. What then? Then, stand still, and see the salvation of God. Lo! he comes,—he comes over and down to us. He stands where we stand; he looks into our faces; he stretches out his arms; he clasps us to his breast. He does not remain distant, ready to receive us after we have by our own energy raised ourselves to yonder height of spiritual attainment. He comes near to bear us first from our low estate up to that height, and afterwards beyond it, all the way to heaven. He will work the first part of our redemption, and the last. He will do all. He does not wait for those who can escape from the trammels of earth, and arise into the region of the spiritual; he descends to the level of mere humanity, and folds in his everlasting love those who lie groaning there. “Jesus wept!” I could not spare that word from my Bible any more than I could spare the incarnation or the intercession. What although he had done divinely all the work, except a little portion at the lower end; unable to do that little for myself, the greater, higher part accomplished would have been of no avail to me. What although he had come, and come to save, all the way from the Godhead down to the spiritual regions in the higher strata of humanity; sunk and loaded as I was, I could not have soared thither to meet him there. He has come the whole way down to us. “Lo, I am with you always!” Look unto Jesus. Behold, he weeps, and weeps with a sister at a brother’s grave. He does not reserve all his concern for our sin; he lavishes his sympathy also upon our sorrows. No chasm remains which

we must pass alone on our way to Christ. He is *God with us*.

In the life of Jesus as recorded for us by the Spirit, there are two weepings. Twice in the body, and on the earth the man Christ Jesus shed tears; but in neither case were they shed for himself. Not in Gethsemane, not on the cross, did Jesus weep. Both the sorrows were for our sakes; but they differed widely from each other. When he drew near Jerusalem, and beheld the city, he wept over it; when he saw a bereaved sister mourning for a dead brother, he wept with her. The one weeping was for human guilt; the other was for human sorrow. The one marks his divine compassion for the sinful; the other his human sympathy with the sufferer. Each is precious in its own place, but the places are widely diverse. The two examples exhibit different qualities of the Saviour, and meet different necessities of men. His compassion for sinners, manifested in his tears over Jerusalem, is a link in the chain by which we are saved, but it is an upper link; his sorrow with a sister beside a brother's grave is a link lower down, and therefore nearer us. His pity for me as a sinner shows that he is great and good; his weeping with me in my sorrow shows that his greatness and goodness are within my reach. When I could not arise to meet him in the region of his own spiritual compassion, he has bowed down to meet me in my natural weakness. I could not rise to lay hold of him, but he bends to take hold of me. Standing where I stand, and weeping when I weep, he enters by the openings which grief has made into my heart, and gently

makes it all his own. My brother, he insinuates himself into me through the emotions of our common nature, that so I may be borne up with him into the regions of spiritual light and liberty. He takes hold of me by my sorrow, that I may get hold of him for deliverance from my sin.

The lesson which I desire to take and give in the close is this: Do not separate yourselves from Christ in the numberless joys and griefs of human life, striving to get near him only in the great affairs that pertain to eternity. To act thus is to throw away some of the sweetest provisions of the covenant. Nor is the sympathy of the Saviour limited to one side of human experience. While he is a brother born specially for adversity, he is equally near and equally welcome in the day of joy. He reclined at a wedding in Cana before he stood by a grave in Bethany. He is man, and touches man with equal tenderness on both sides of his being. If Christians lie open at all points for Christ's sympathy, his sympathy at all points will stream in.

Christians, twine your heart round the love of Christ in little common earthly things; this will test whether you possess spiritual life, and nourish the regenerate into greater strength. To realize the Redeemer's manhood, and nearness, and brotherliness, will make religion more easy to the single-eyed, but more difficult to the double-minded. To those who love the presence of the Lord, no news can be more welcome than that he is near; to those who do not, no news can be more dreadful. God with us, in our own nature, compassing our being about, and

touching our life at every point, as the air bathes every outspread leaf, and enters for the tree's sustenance at every pore,—this intelligence comes to a living Christian like cold waters to a thirsty soul. An Israelite, indeed, leaps with joy when he learns that his Redeemer will be to him “as the dew.”

Open your mouth wide and he will fill it. Keep all your being open to all the sympathy of Christ. Do not banish him from your earth, and he will not shut you out from his heaven.

XVI.

THE STRAIT GATE NOT A SHUT GATE.

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”—MATT. vii. 14.

IN the Scriptures, as in God whom they reveal, “goodness and severity” are marvellously united and harmonized. Sometimes this side, and sometimes that is more directly presented to view, but both are present in every exhibition of divine truth. When one is set forth in the light, the other necessarily remains in shade; and it is by alternate presentations that a full and impartial view is obtained. When mercy is, in express terms, held forth to men, a careful observer may trace the outline of judgment lying in fainter light behind it; when judgment is displayed, it leans on a back-ground of love. The sweetest promise holds in solution the terrors of the Lord; terrors have mercy in their bosom, and burst in blessings on the head of the penitent. “Come unto me, ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest;” here is a promise, distilling like dew from the Lord’s own lips; but the other side of that tender word is a sword that might pierce the joints and marrow of every formalist. If the weary who come to Christ are saved, the weary who do not come to Christ perish. Again, look to the sharp threatening, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;” and through the dark tran-

sparency you may read, in lines of light beyond, the cheering counterpart, Turn and live.

Such is the character of the Bible as a whole ; and in this respect our text may serve as an illustrative specimen. Every word of God is needed, each in its own place, as the sustaining food of his children. The terrors are as useful and as necessary as the promises. The same God who made day and night to serve different yet conspiring purposes in nature, has exhibited alternate streaks of light and shade in the revelation of his will to men. Righteousness and peace embrace each other throughout all providence and all grace. Wherever mercy is manifested in the gospel, there is a just God; wherever justice frowns, it is making way for mercy. These two agree in one. Conspicuously they meet in Christ crucified. There "the goodness and severity of God" are most clearly seen. It is beside the cross that you may see a sinner saved and a sinner lost. Those who trust in Christ cannot be lost; those who distrust cannot be saved.

The text is a scroll written within and without. The sterner aspect is turned this way. Judgment is the direct and ostensible announcement; but mercy lies within, and obliquely glances through the folds. While the unbending requirements of the divine holiness are here proclaimed more loudly, the still small voice of invitation and encouragement is equally articulate and sure.

We shall glance first at the side of the text which is more obviously presented, and then endeavour to read the inscription which lies more in the shade. We shall

take nothing out of the text, except what even the less instructed may easily see lying in it. Our effort shall be, not to bring our own meaning into the text, but to bring out of the text, for our own and others' use, the meaning with which the Holy Spirit has charged it.

I. The faithfulness of a holy God,—the meaning which lies more obvious on the surface.

II. The tenderness of a merciful Father,—the meaning which lies in the heart, and more faintly, but not less certainly shines through.

I. The faithfulness of a holy God. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Ver. 8).

Sin has separated man from God, and the whole world lies in an "outer darkness." In this state all men are born, and in this state all abide, unless and until they are saved, one by one, in Christ. All the world is a way. It is so broad that the whole generation for the time travel abreast upon it. Like a river ever flowing is the stream of human life, moving along that world-wide path. Cold, dark, dead is the mass; outward, downward it flows. The world is a lost world. We are of it at first, and shall perish with it at last, unless in the day of mercy we come out from it, and enter into life new creatures in Christ.

To the perishing a Messenger has come, and the message which he brings is life from the dead. Christ died for our sins, and rose again for our justification. To the

poor the gospel is preached. To you, O men, he calls, and his voice is to the sons of men. Whosoever will, let him come.

Such are the glad tidings that have come from heaven to earth. But what sound is this that grates upon our ears, and whence does it proceed? It is the voice of Jesus, and it proclaims, "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life." Strait, narrow, few! These are hard sayings, who can hear them? Ah! it is still the same as it was in the period of his personal ministry. Many when they hear him, and take into their minds some faint glimpses of his meaning, go away and walk no more with him. Brethren, will ye also go away? But to whom can you go, when you flee from this speaker? These, though they thunder in an unclean conscience like the knell of doom,—these are the words of eternal life. There is no gentler Saviour than he who utters them; there is no easier path to heaven than that to which they point.

The way that leads down to destruction is broad and easy. It requires no exertion, no self-denial, no crucifying of sinful desires. You have nothing more to do than lie like a withered leaf upon the stream, and without a thought or an effort you are carried quickly down. Sinners do not find it difficult to sin.

But to turn from this broad path unto the narrow way of life is difficult. It does not fall in with the current of a man's natural affections to follow the Lamb in the way of life. The act is above nature; a man cannot do it: the act is contrary to nature; a man will

not do it. The terms are, "If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me."

"The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh : and these are contrary the one to the other" (Gal. v. 17). They who would walk with Christ must hold themselves ready to cut off offending right arms, and pluck out offending right eyes. Men do not like to do that even although they know and confess it to be necessary. Many stand and shiver on the edge of the kingdom, resolving to plunge into it some day, but every day postponing the painful act till the morrow. Alas, if they stand near the kingdom considering, until death overtake them, they will drop on the outside and come short of it for ever!

I speak here not to the careless who have never experienced the pain of conviction, but to the convinced who hang back because the step forward is difficult. I dare not go about to tell you that it is easy. I cannot make a plainer gospel than that which I find here. I cannot call that easy which Jesus pronounced hard ; or that wide which he declared to be narrow. A God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. Heaven and earth may pass away, but not one of these words. He is the Truth, and he has said, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life."

The gate unto life is *strait*. Dreams, by their unfettered combinations, give sometimes a better picture of great spiritual facts than any of the limited occurrences of actual life. It would appear that the human spirit dur-

ing sleep is less clogged by the body, and capable of a freer, wider range. In the visions of the night you may have been in some unknown place of great but indefinite danger. All was dark above, all slippery beneath, all enemies around. You were about to be swallowed up. You tried to flee, but your limbs were feeble, they would not bear you up; your limbs were cramped, they would not carry you forward. By painful efforts, stumbling at every step, you reach a lofty wall within which lies safety; but you are exposed without, and unable to climb over. At length you discover a door in the wall at some distance, and make for the spot with all your might. On the way your feet sink in miry clay. After a long struggle you reach the place, only to discover that the opening is too narrow to let your body through. But as the case is desperate you make an effort. Pressing, agonizing in, you are caught on every side. A sense of suffocation creeps over you, and you faint away. You are glad when you awake, although with a beating heart, and find that it is a dream. I have gone into the dim, middle region of sleep for a picture, because I have never seen one on all this waking world that so truly represents the state of the case. The unconverted, when some rays of light from the Scriptures come into the conscience, become alarmed. They apprehend danger, dread hell, and cast a longing look to heaven. They would like to go into the place where they have been told sinners will be safe, but there is no entrance that will admit the old man. They are afraid of being cast away, and yet are not willing to be stripped of their own

selves in passing through the narrow entrance into life.

There is no wider gate in the wall of heaven for the convenience of those who would like to carry in themselves and their sins. Except a man be born again, he can neither see nor enter the kingdom of God. A freer gospel than that is not a true gospel. If sinners are saved, either God must change or they. He changeth not; nothing that defileth shall enter into his presence. In the act of coming, the old man must be put off. It is a rending,—it is a crucifying of the flesh. If you think it enough to condemn any religious system that it runs counter to the strong current of a human will, you will reject Christ and the salvation which he brings. The offence of the cross has not ceased. He who bare it for us warns us plainly that we must bear it with him.

The chief practical danger lies not in resolving to remain without, but in delaying to arise and press in. I think not many—perhaps not one whom I address will be lost through a formal determination not to agree to the Saviour's terms; those who perish under the sound of the gospel perish mainly through a delay in closing with the offer and the offerer. A disease appears in one of your limbs. It is local in its character, and may be safely removed from the body; but it is deadly in its nature, and if not removed will bring your body to the grave. You know the state of the case. You know that your life depends on the severance of the infected member; but you shudder at the prospect of the operation. You know that it must be done, but you do not

like to do it. Most natural! None who has a brother's heart will harshly upbraid you for your weakness. But a true friend, although he sympathizes with you in your suffering, will give no countenance to your refusal, or your procrastination. The poison will soon spread through the frame. If the deed is not done to-day, it may be done too late to-morrow.

Brethren, a deadly disease is in your immortal being. The part must be put off, if you would enter into life. To know and confess that it must be done will not save you. To go about sad all your days because it must be done will not save you. Nothing will save but doing it. There is the gate. It is strait. The compassionate Redeemer of men has told us that it is strait. He will not make it wider that the carnal may get through. Although a whole world should remain without and perish because it is strait, God will not make the entrance easier. The terms are clear and fixed. There is no ambiguity, and will be no change. The carnal are invited to enter the kingdom of God, but it is by a gate which will crush off their corrupt nature as they go in. Strive to enter. There is no other entrance, and no time to be lost. If it be not now, it may be never.

II. The tenderness of a merciful Father. See now, in a series of four separate points, the consolation which the text contains:—

1. There *is a gate*. When a window is opened in heaven to display a terror, The gate is strait, we see within, and read the mercy, There is a gate. Such is

the union of mercy and righteousness in God's covenant, that wherever one is manifested, the other also is exposed to view. In the very fact of telling the sinful that the gate is strait, the Scripture makes known for comfort to the convicted that there is a gate. While the ostensible announcement is, Your corruptions must be excluded, the covert intimation is, Yourself may go in. In form the text is a stroke directed against a sinful man, but in its nature it is intended to take effect only on the man's sin to destroy it, and so permit the emancipated man to enter into the joy of his Lord.

Within this faithfulness lies love ; the way is not easy to the carnal mind, but there is a way. This is a father's voice. It is rough, as beseems it, when the child is prodigal. The sounds are forbidding, "strait," "narrow," "few,"—but the words forbid the entrance only of that which defileth. A father's heart is yearning beneath this stern look. He keeps back the filth, and rags, and employments, and associates of the prodigal ; but he receives his lost and returning child. The gate is narrow,—tremble, self-pleasing, worldly, godless men ; but be of good cheer, weeping, heart-broken, conscience-stricken sinner, for the gate is not shut. The way is open. Yet there is room in the Lord's heaven,—the Lord's heart,—for you. If some of the Queen's soldiers were taken prisoners by the enemy, and confined in a fortress far in the interior of a foreign land ; and if an intimation were conveyed to the captives by a friendly hand that, at a certain part of their prison walls there is an opening to liberty and home, but that the opening is narrow and the path beyond it rough,

their hearts would forthwith fill with joy. They would feel already free. Strait gate! what do they care for its straitness?—enough for them that there is a gate. Ere that setting sun get round to gild the east again, many long miles will be between them and the house of bondage. Surer and safer is their outgate, if slaves to sin were as willing to be free.

2. The gate *leadeth unto life*. If the passage is dark and narrow like the grave, the mansion in which it issues is as bright as heaven, and as large as eternity. If one set of pleasures must be crushed by the straitness of the entrance, another set of pleasures begin as soon as you emerge into the light and liberty that lie beyond. If you have put off the old man, you have put on the new. If the pleasures of sin must be left behind, the pleasures of holiness await you at God's right hand for evermore. If there is pain in the regeneration, there is gladness in a new life. From within the kingdom, even as it exists imperfectly on earth, already resounds the hum of a happy home; the strait gate and the new life to which it led are woven both into a hymn, and sung in faith by saints before they get a sight of glory: "We went through fire and water, but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place" (Ps. lxvi. 12).

3. Those who enter neither make nor open the gate; they only *find* it.

Although the gate is strait, it appears from the text that its straitness is not the ultimate reason why so few go in. It is not written, Few there be that can force through, but, Few there be that find it. Men

spend their strength for nought in efforts to escape from condemnation where the Mediator has not made a way. Though awakened sinners labour in the fires, they can never make any impression on the wall of wrath that stands between the wicked and the favour of God.

The first Adam's sin was our way out. We were carried out in him before any individual personal departure was yet possible. When our individual life begins, it begins in a distant place, and with an alienated spirit. When one of these strangers in a strange land begins to learn the history of man's apostasy, and the alienation of his own heart, his first thought is to retrace his steps. He has come out from God's favour by sin ; he will return by holiness. Forthwith he falls to work in earnest. Alas, that way is shut. Outside the frowning barrier swarm the multitudes of all kindreds and tongues, who strive to be their own saviours. One will give ten thousand rivers of oil. Another, more alarmed, and more in earnest, will give the fruit of his body for the sin of his soul. Another will waste or wound his own flesh at the bidding of a priest who will assure him of an entrance. Another, without the intervention of any human mediator, will, under the spur of an alarmed but unenlightened conscience, abandon this life to blank, slavish fear, not daring to enjoy any comfort or any hour, in order that he may more surely propitiate the judge, and finally make his way into heaven. It is all labour lost. There is no gate on that side, and you cannot make one. By the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. As long as the terms are, Keep the commandments, all men must go

away sorrowful, There is no salvation in any or all of these efforts.

Beware of a fatal mistake at this point. When you are taught that all your efforts absolutely go for nothing, do not imagine that therefore God is indifferent to the fulfilment of his own law. He is ready to accept obedience whenever and wherever it is offered. He does not recede from the terms which his ambassador offered in the course of his mission: "If thou wilt enter into life keep the commandments." It is not that he draws back from this bargain; but that no man fulfils its terms. We offer to God what we call righteousness, but it is not righteousness. Love is the fulfilling of the law, and nothing but love. As long as you labour to get God's anger appeased, it is not love that inspires your effort. In the nature of things, a struggle to avert God's anger cannot be the fruit of love to God. It is not your love of a God who is ready to condemn you that takes his condemnation away, but the free removal of the condemnation that makes you begin to love God. Once alienated and under condemnation, a man can never gain a footing to begin upon, that he may work his way back into favour. By the nature both of God and of man, it is impossible. The love that would engender obedience, cannot itself begin to be, until his anger is taken away. The wall meets you on this side, and there is no opening. Christ shows, —Christ is the way. In Adam, we came out by his fall; in Christ, we go in on the ground of his righteousness. To be in Christ by faith—that is necessary, and that is enough. He goes in by righteousness, and bears in all his own.

All the delay and all the loss occur through the error of trying to make a gate, instead of seeking the gate that is already made. Its straitness, though hard to nature, never yet kept one earnest inquirer out. It is true of all who enter that they were stript of their old nature in the passage ; but it is true of all who remain without, that they perish, not because the gate is narrow, but because they expended all their time and strength on a side where there is not a gate at all.

Be of good cheer : that which is impossible is not necessary ; that which is necessary is not impossible. The word is not, Make a way, but Seek the way that Christ has made.

4. He who made the way, and keeps it open now, is *glad when many "go in thereat."*

"Few there be that find it!" Does that word *few* resound in your ear as a deep-drawn threat that closes heaven against the common throng of average humanity? Does it steal over you in hours of solitude, as if it would choke the breath of your hope? Do not wrest the Scriptures to your own destruction. Do not misread and misrepresent the plain meaning of the best teacher. He takes it ill when his words are turned upside down, and his truth thereby changed into a lie. Who said that few find the way, and in what tone did he utter the words? Jesus spoke them, and spoke them with a sigh. His complaint that few are coming is the sweetest and strongest encouragement for all to come.

What proportion of human kind, in any one, or in all generations, shall, in point of fact, be saved, and what

proportion lost, is a question with which we have no concern, and which our Teacher expressly refused to answer. It is our business not to pry into the secret things of God, but to look upon the world as it lies in wickedness, and strive to diminish the crowds that are thronging the broad way. "Few," in the lips of Jesus, is not the final summation of the names in the Lamb's book of life, after the accounts of time are closed, but the invitation to them that are ready to perish, while yet their day of grace is running, and before the door is shut. Few! but, Lord, are there not a multitude whom no man can number already walking with thee in white, and many thousands more than Jewish prophets reck of, now in the body saved, waiting for the call to rest? Yes; and yet there is room. His soul is not satisfied yet. He is yearning for more, and will yearn, as long as one sinner remains on earth unsaved. Although he saw the lost coming to himself, the Saviour, like doves to their windows, and coming in numbers like the sand on the sea-shore, he would still cry, Few, as long as any lingered. We owe great thanks to Jesus for speaking this word.

Enough is a word that sometimes rends a human heart, and quenches hope's last feeble rays under a black, suffocating cloud of despair. The great ship, pierced by a sunken rock, is slowly settling down in the sea. The boats are lowered, and filled with a promiscuous throng of young and old, male and female. Each boat shoves off as soon as it has taken in its complement. The largest lingers longest, because it can take in most. At last the stern voice of the officer in charge resounds clear

above the hum of the eager multitude: Enough; give way. That word sank, like the dart of death, into the hearts of the helpless remnant who were left upon the wreck.

If Jesus should to-day send a great angel, with a commission to stand with one foot on the land, and another on the sea, and cry, Enough! heaven is full, and the Saviour satisfied has shut the gate! If one should dream that he heard from heaven this dreadful message, and be awakened by the shock, how sweetly then would the tender plaint of Jesus—Few there be that find it—fall upon his startled ear.

This is the word that meets a man to-day when he awakens from the sleep of sin, trembling in terror of the judgment. It is the voice of Jesus issuing yet from an open heaven. He complains that few are coming; sinners are the kind that he came to seek; he has gotten some, and is wanting more,—is wanting you.

XVII.

GOOD CHEER FOR SAD HEARTS.

“And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed : and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee.”—MATT. ix. 2.

A PICTURE, taken from life as it was passing by, and fixed on the page of that Word, “which liveth and abideth for ever.” It represents the sick lying helpless, and the physician coming to his aid. Those powers of healing which Jesus exercised were peculiarly fitted to let his compassion flow on men, and encourage men to count with confidence on his compassion. These miracles were at once outlets for love from Him, and inlets of hope to us. The cures which he wrought were mercy embodied that it might be visible even to those who had not yet attained the spiritual mind. Love incarnated in power grasps the diseased body, in order that thereby it may reach for healing the diseased soul. Jesus, in the days of his flesh, made the human body his avenue of access to the spirit. The ailment of a member became the opening at which he entered to possess and purify the man. When for his people’s sake he personally withdrew from earth, and sent the Holy Spirit down, the method of administration was changed, but the purpose and the result remained essentially the same. The ministry of reconciliation now is spirit witnessing to spirit by

the word ; but it seemed meet to God, in his wisdom, to give the body a more prominent place in the beginning of the gospel. Faith, in its feeble infancy, needed and got a touch of the hem of Christ's garment as a handle and help ; but through the glorious ministry of the spirit, faith may now, without any material medium, go up into that which is within the veil, and lean for life on the unseen Intercessor there.

The record of these healing works remains as a kind of alphabet or first lesson in the faith. Knowing that we think and speak as children, our Master in heaven gives lessons for beginners in his word. Children are taken, taught, touched by pictures ; by pictures, accordingly, he permits and encourages the little children to come unto him.

The subject here is *sin* ; the lessons thereon mainly two,—the first its relation to the body ; the second its removal by the Lord. That unfolds the helpless condition of fallen man ; and this the glorious grace of a redeeming God.

I. SIN—*its relation to the body.*

Sin, we know, is a "spiritual wickedness ;" its sphere of action, accordingly, is in "high places." Mere matter, whether it lie an amorphous clod in the valley, or move as an organized living body, cannot sin. We must get up into higher regions ere we can reach either moral good or moral evil. "God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit ;" they who offend him offend him in spirit too. Ascending from

the lower to the higher departments of creation, it is in man that we first reach a region where sin can be. In those high places where a finite but immortal spirit comes in contact with the Spirit infinite and eternal, lies the only element that is capable of sustaining either spiritual purity or spiritual wickedness; yet though sin draws its life-breath in those heavenly places, its members press the earth, and leave their marks indented deep over all its surface. Though sin lives secretly in the soul, it works terribly in the body.

As sin works outward through the body, punishment strikes the body on its way to the seat of sin. The rebound of judgment follows the blow of rebellion. Proceeding from the heart, its fountain, and passing through the outward bodily acts, sin blindly strikes against the throne of God; from that throne vengeance returns, like an echo, by the same path to the same place. The reward comes surely, quickly back on the track by which the work went out. "The wages of sin is death." "Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

Death has a deep meaning and many issues. We cannot by our searching find it out. None of us have seen its other side. Death is like a mighty angel, with one foot standing on time, and another on eternity. This last enemy strikes the body, as a robber forces open the door of a house, in order to reach the treasure that lies within. If the soul's life has been hid with Christ in God before that last assault, the spoiler will be disappointed of his prey. "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present,

nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38, 39).

Death to man is in its nature and effects different from the dissolution of other animated beings. It behoves us to walk by faith here; for if we walk by sight only, Satan will get an advantage over us, and notwithstanding our sound creed, we shall certainly stumble. The creatures whose spirits go downwards die; and man dies too whose spirit goes upward to God who gave it. Unless we recognise a difference, wide as eternity, between these two dyings, we have lost the light of faith, and are wandering in darkness.

The blood circulates in the bodies of inferior animals precisely as it does in man. The various functions of life in them, are performed by corporeal organs analogous to our own. As far as the evidence of the senses goes, there seems no essential difference between the birth or death of one animated being, and the birth or death of another. Great though the distinction be, unless we have faith, and faith in exercise, we shall miss it wholly. An eye must be opened in the soul capable of looking not only on things seen and temporal, but also on things unseen and eternal.

Death seems to have been in the world before sin, but not the death of man. Marks have been found in the crust of the earth, which prove to the satisfaction of nearly all intelligent observers, that successive races of creatures lived and died on this globe before the period assigned in the Scriptures to the creation of men. But the science which proclaims that living creatures died before sin began, pos-

sesses no evidence that death touched the creature who is capable of sinning, until it came as the wages of sin. Hitherto the researches of science, as far as they go, coincide with the intimations of Scripture. There is no room for vaunting on one side, or fear on another. The works and the word of God agree. Our business is to read them both aright.

The world, which was at first without form and void, was by a lengthened process, and many successive operations, made ready at last for man. The head of a long ascending series of animated beings was reached at last. There the Creator paused and said, Let us make man in our own image. Thus man became a living soul, although he was allied to inferior creatures in the material and structure of his bodily organization. When God formed an immortal being as the climax of his creation, he did not make man's material part a paradox in nature. He made it according to the analogy of his other works, and the most perfect of them all.

Man, having been made in God's image immortal and spiritual, was not subject to dissolution by the laws of nature like the beasts that perish. He was separated from them not in degree of excellence merely, but in the essence of his nature. He was not the brother of the brute, but the son of God. Holy man was by creation beyond the reach of death. Death came upon him, not as the law of his nature, but as the wages of his sin. Rebellion against God threw down this second generation of his sons as it had thrown down the first. Man fell by sin as angels had already fallen. Partaking of the

nature of the angels in his immortal spirit, and of the nature of the brutes in his material body, he became liable to both the deaths,—to the separation of the soul from God, and the dissolution of the body in the dust.

But although by his body man participates in the death of inferior creatures, his soul cannot die. Annihilation is not the punishment of man's sin ; the creation of another race is not the compensation provided for his Maker's loss.

The method of divine mercy is to raise up the fallen, to purify the polluted, to reconcile the alienated, to quicken again the dead. All the mansions of the Father's house shall one day ring again with the voice of gladness, and when angel elder brothers, coming in from their appointed labour, shall inquire the reason of the mirth, they shall get for answer from the glad Father's lips, as he points to regenerated and reconciled man, "This my son was dead, and is alive again ; was lost, and is found." To restore the lost, to revive the dead, is the design of the gospel, is the end of the Lord. This is Christ's errand to the earth, and his occupation now in heaven.

Here is one of that high-born but now prostrate family ; here is one of God's grandest temples lying in ruins, and God manifest in the flesh coming to that temple with intent to restore. "They brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed : and Jesus, seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer ; thy sins be forgiven thee." Disease was there, the forerunner and symptom of the body's death. So far the man and his friends plainly saw ; but Jesus looked through

these outer effects to the inner cause. He sees not only the paralysis on the man's body, but also the sin in the man's soul. This physician goes at a glance to the root of the disease. In his view the palsy that stiffens the patient's limbs is neither the first nor the last of the case ; it is only the middle part that is here exposed to view. Jesus, though as man he stands on earth, as God lives in eternity. There, beyond our reach, he sees the beginning and the ending of the patient's ailment. Sin is the well in which it springs, and perdition the sea to which it is flowing. When he looks on disease, he sees its beginning and its ending : his work is to cut short its course, ere it issue in the second death. He looks upward and downward : he will not confine his view to these symptoms which appear in the body, and pertain to time. To prevent the final issue, he removes the first cause. Permitting his lips to follow the purpose of his heart, he makes no mention of the paralysis, but pronounces pardon of the sin.

By passing over the obvious disease, and speaking of only the unseen sin, he shows clearly what his mission is not, and what it is. He came not to deliver the body from the temporal consequences of sin, but the man from its power here, and its presence hereafter. In as far as sin causes the dissolution of the body, it is left incurable ; for its deeper issues a remedy is provided in the gospel of Christ. Although in this and other cases Jesus put forth his power to heal disease and lengthen the term of life in the body, he made it plain from first to last that this portion of sin's wages even redeemed sinners must yet

receive. He does not by an exercise of omnipotence ward off death from the bodies of them that believe, but in love and wisdom infinite he turns the curse into a blessing. The enemy who comes with intent to destroy the captive is not stopped and turned at a distance: he is permitted to break open the prison door, and then his hand is stayed. After that, death has no more that he can do upon the redeemed. The Lord had need of some servant of strength sufficient to break those iron bars asunder, and he served himself to this extent of the old destroyer. In the first instance, he takes no note of that death which was carrying its approaches over the patient's body, preparatory to the final stroke. Silently he intimates that this messenger must sooner or later do his work. Christ's mission is not to perpetuate this life, but to lead all his people through the gate of death into the life eternal. His word, accordingly, is not, Thy body shall not die, but, Thy sins are forgiven.

II. SIN—*its removal by the Lord.* In the text and its surrounding context we shall find a series of distinct yet connected intimations regarding the Physician and his method of cure.

1. It is *by a free pardon* that sin is removed and its eternal consequences averted. This is the remedy which the Saviour has provided for the disease of sin. There is no other cure. All other methods either aggravate the ailment or deceive the patient by healing slightly the superficial wound, while the death poison still remains in the blood. "Blessed is the man whose transgressions

are forgiven," and no other man is really blessed, whatever his profession or his hope may be.

To shut our eyes and refuse to see the worst in ourselves is the part of a fool, although a great multitude adopt it. To plunge into business and pleasure, making the two succeed each other so closely that there shall be no opening left between them for the inroad of uncomfortable conviction, is not a safe method of treating the case. To forget the sin that is in us will not turn away God's anger from us in the great and terrible day. Neither is it safe to represent our sins as small in comparison with those which others commit: "They, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. x. 12, 18). The Judge will not decide by our measurement, but by his own. To cover the sin which lies on the conscience with a layer of earnest efforts to do right will not take the sin away: the underlying sin will assimilate all the dead works that may be heaped upon it, and the result will be a greater mass of sin. There is no solid ground for comfort in the thought, that where all are defaulters one may escape in the throng. The Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not nor is weary. He works by law, both in punishing and rewarding. You may as well think that because there are many rain-drops in the bursting thunder-cloud some may be overlooked, and escape the necessity of falling to the ground. All are under law, and their law is to fall by their own weight. The sinful are under law, and their

law is that sin is its own avenger. Yet another unsafe method is sometimes tried : it is to let by-gones be by-gones, and begin a new score, in the hope that though the old is evil the new will be good. The new will be no better than the old ; and although it were, the old sin unforgiven will be the seed of the second death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. Not any—not all of these appliances will avail. When the patient has spent all he had on these physicians, he finds, as the only result, that his disease has eaten more deeply in, and spread more widely out. To cure a soul of sin one thing is needful, and that one is enough ; sin must be forgiven. The cure which we need, and which Christ gives, is an absolute and entire removal of the guilt, so that the forgiven shall be in God's judgment now, and in his presence at last, the same as if he had never sinned. You may have observed that provision is made in nature corresponding to the appetites of living creatures, and that the appetites of living creatures correspond to the provision made in nature for their supply. Thirst and water are reciprocally counterparts : so are hunger and food. In the new creation the desire and its gratification fit as finely. " I, even I, am he that blotteth out thine iniquity ;" behold the provision of the covenant—the bread from heaven that drops in the desert ! " Pardon mine iniquity, for it is great ;" behold the appetite wherewith God's Israel craves the provided food ! That which the Father delights to bestow, and the returning prodigal pants to receive, is pardon. Pardon, accordingly, the Mediator gets from God and gives to the man. At once

discerning and supplying the cardinal necessity of the case, the Physician said to the paralytic, "Thy sins be forgiven thee."

2. The Saviour to whom this needy man was brought has *power* to forgive sins. This is a peculiar kind of power. It belongs to Christ in virtue of his finished work as his people's substitute. We do not say that, apart from the satisfaction of the substitute, God cannot forgive sin, simply because we cannot by searching find out God; but apart from that satisfaction God does not forgive sin. The power to forgive is not the essential omnipotence of deity, but the acquired right of Him who bore the law's curse, and offered to the law a perfect righteousness in our nature and in our stead. It is "Christ crucified" that "is the power of God" for the pardon of sin. While he hung upon the cross they cast in his teeth the taunt, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." True, although the speakers knew not the meaning of their own words. Because he had become security for his people he could not save himself. Even He could not save both himself and them from the wrath which sin deserves. He bare it that we might be set free. There and thereby our Redeemer acquired the power to forgive sin.

3. Christ has power to forgive *on earth*. The word limits the position, not of the Forgiver, but of the forgiven. He forgave while he walked with men on earth, and when he was dying for them on the cross: he forgives now upon the throne of his glory. Either in earth or in heaven he can give pardon; but only on earth can

we receive it. Now is the day of salvation; and this is its place. While we are on this earth, and in the body, Christ has power to forgive our sin, and he is willing. He will cast out none who come. But when a sinner passes unpardoned out of time into eternity, even Jesus has not power to forgive him then and there. Well may the Scriptures ask, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" He who without repentance runs out his day of grace, and goes in his guilt through the gates of death to the throne of judgment, puts it out of his own power to obtain, and out of the Redeemer's power to bestow, forgiveness. "Depart from me" is the only answer which the knocker who knocks too late will ever hear.

4. The *Son of man* hath power to forgive. Here is great consolation; the power lies in our Brother's hands. He who wept with a sister sorrowing, and for a great city's sin, possesses the prerogative of pardon, and wields it now. To him hath God given authority to extend pardon now, and to execute judgment at last, "because he is the Son of man." It is in virtue of his human nature that the merit of his sacrifice and righteousness can become ours. It is not enough that Christ is God; that alone would have availed us nothing. He who is eternal God became man. By his union with us in the same nature all the treasures of the Godhead become the fountain of our supply. His manhood brought his saving power within the reach of man.

5. Christ the Saviour, in coming to a sinful, suffering man, desires not only that he should be safe hereafter, but also *happy now*. "Son, be of good cheer," was the

great Physician's first salutation. Read the mind of Jesus in his own words and acts; do not receive the distorted pictures which lie in an evil heart of unbelief. Perhaps no specific wile of the devil is more extensively successful than that which represents the company of Christ to be, although needful to the dying, a dreary, melancholy endurance through the course of life. The secret unconfessed apprehension is, that while without earnest personal religion one cannot die safely, with it one cannot hope to lead a cheerful life. No feeling regarding religion is more widely prevalent, yet none is more false. At first he came unto his own, and his own received him not; and still men misinterpret the heart of Jesus. Draw near, ye who think religion a burden which it is necessary but hard to bear,—who think the moment a man begins to keep company with Christ he may bid farewell to cheerfulness, and lay his account with a life of gloom,—draw near and behold this great sight! Himself the Man of sorrows, he knows the sorrows that are in men. He approaches the pale, spiritless, trembling paralytic, and his foremost word is, Courage!

Here is a strange coincidence. On this point, surely, the world and the world's Saviour are already at one. Good cheer! Christ and those who have no part in Christ agree in that desire. He who has all power in heaven and in earth expressly desires for us the very thing which we all ardently desire for ourselves; shall we not, therefore, all certainly attain it? Not necessarily; there are many methods of pursuing happiness—only one of overtaking it.

Every man has his own way of seeking good cheer. Money, lands, learning, fame, food and drink, company by night or day, amusement, politics, war, and many more, have each its own admirers. But must a man abandon the use of all that now affords him good cheer the moment he becomes a Christian? No, brother; Christ our Saviour has a tender human heart. He rejoiced with them that rejoiced, and wept with them that wept. He reclined with friends and relatives at a marriage feast, and stood with sisters beside their brother's grave, his heart in either case in unison with his company,—rejoicing in that place, sorrowing in this. He takes no pleasure in depriving his creatures of any enjoyment. He gives them all good, and gives it that it may be enjoyed. But he occupies a higher stand-point than we, and commands a wider view. There was plenty of good cheer in Jerusalem when Jesus with his disciples was for the last time approaching it by the way of Bethany and Bethphage. The throng within the city were eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, when he looked down upon them from the hill, and wept. Underneath their merriment he saw unforgiven sin, and over it the charged thunder-cloud of judgment. He could not join in their joy, because he saw that its flickering thorn-flame would soon be quenched in wrath. He wept while they laughed, not because he was against good cheer, but because he was for it.

In like manner that same Jesus looks down upon this city to-day, and sees its multitudes seeking good cheer each in his own way; but he sees beneath and beyond the

mirth of fools. He sees sin on the conscience of the man, and its wages written in the book of God. His desire is that we should have good cheer, not in the revelry of a night, but through life, in the hour of departure, and when the earth and sea shall give up their dead !

In a fertile valley of northern Italy, within the Sardinian territory, on a certain sunny day of spring, groups of country people are gathering,—the young for active sport, and the old for the pleasure of looking on. A troop of horsemen bearing their own king's well-known colours, sweep swiftly across the plain, hurry off the whole multitude, and shut them up within the gloomy grey walls of a neighbouring fortress. Why should their sport be spoilt so rudely, and that, too, by their own friends? A cruel enemy was approaching like a flood, and their own watchful prince carried off his defenceless subjects to a place of safety.

In our nature and for us, Jesus has gone into the heavens. From that height he sees us down in this low place. He takes no delight in the mirth of a thoughtless multitude, while a sea of endless sorrow, held off for a time by long-suffering Omnipotence, threatens every moment to close and cover them. He loves us too truly and too deeply to let us laugh away our day of mercy with sin unpardoned lying on our souls. To heal the sorrows of a human heart, and open there a spring of unfailing joy, one thing, in our Redeemer's view, is needful, but one is enough. It is the *pardon of sin*. The Captain of our salvation would first carry us into the refuge, and permit us to be joyful then.

The charge, openly or covertly made against religion, that it is a disturber of the peace, is in one sense true. Christ's witnesses, representing their benignant Lord, confess frankly that his presence in the heart damps the joy of unrenewed, unforgiven man. He came not to send peace to these, but a sword; and his way is to plunge it into their joints and marrow. He spares not for their crying. But, brother, when you fall and faint, look up and see the face of Jesus bending over you; a divine compassion is beaming through. He has sought and found you, whoever you are, on whose ear this word falls to-day. He has closed with you in the same way as if there were not another sinner in the world needing his compassion. By this word now he holds you, and compels you to listen and look. Here is his offer now made to you. He desires to make you cheerful, and his way of making men cheerful is to forgive their sins. Close with his method, and he will make the result good.

But here is a man whose heart still murmurs, Religion should not make people sad. Laying aside all figures and forms,—making the word bare that through God's gracious help it may go in, I repeat,—*He who is at enmity with God should not be cheerful.* Pardon, PARDON is the way to peace.

XVIII.

CHRISTIANS IN DARKNESS WHEN CHRIST
IS NOT NEAR.

“And it was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them.”—JOHN vi. 17.

CERTAIN fishermen in their boat are crossing the Sea of Galilee, and making for their home on its western shore. The wind suddenly increases into a gale; the waves are rising; the darkness is settling down; the men are in danger, and are accordingly afraid. But all this happens at many times and in many places. Why should these common and homely things find a place in such a solemn book as the Bible? This is indeed a step in the daily life of some poor labourers, but it is the step at which Jesus joins their company. Heaven, bowed down, touches the earth at this spot, and glory glances from the point of contact. If the spot on the road near Damascus where Saul of Tarsus fell were certainly known, a traveller would tread reverently over it. Little things grow great when they become the hinge on which life or death eternal turns. That place cannot be accounted common or mean where Jesus met a sinner to give life from the dead at first, or refreshing to the living afterwards. No monument may fix the spot or record its history; but it is marked in angels' memories, and celebrated in the songs of saints. The earth's surface will yet be thickly dotted all over with the birth-places

of the King's sons and daughters. These, blending into one when viewed from heaven, will make this dull globe in its Maker's eyes more glorious than any star that sparkles in the firmament.

Every word, and step, and act of Jesus had a design and a significance. He had meat to eat which others knew not. He was straitened until his work was done. He held to his purpose without wavering, like the sun in his course. In all places, among all persons, at all times, he was wholly bent on finishing his work. His consent at one time and his refusal at another, his sermon here and his silence there, his retirement to a desert place to-day, and his mingling with the miscellaneous throng on the streets of the city to-morrow, were all, and all alike, designed and adapted to carry forward his purpose, and make his redemption complete. In the life of Jesus there was no useless act, no idle hour. Every part was vital ; and, as any portion of a living willow, if cut off and planted, will itself become a tree, each step of his history is separately charged with saving grace.

This step of his lowly life was directed by the same wisdom and love which prompted the plan of redemption in the eternal council, and determine the government of the world still. Take this text in connection with its circumstances, and read the testimony which it contains on—

- I. Christ's thoughts about his disciples ; and,
- II. The disciples' thoughts about Christ.

Although in the enunciation these two subjects are en-

tirely distinct, in the illustration they must, from the nature of the case, be permitted in some measure to intermingle. It is as if we stood between two mirrors and looked alternately on either side, in either surface we would see the objects which belong to both. On the whole, we shall gain in order and distinctness by turning first to the one side and then to the other; but we must not be surprised although the same objects should come twice into view.

I. Christ's thoughts about his disciples: "It was now dark, and Jesus was not come to them."

1. He leaves men, whether the world in general or his own people in particular, for a time in fear and danger. The text records an isolated act, but it is an act in the government of the unchanging One. The principle of that act runs through all his administration. What he does at one time he does, with appropriate variations of form, at all times. Accordingly, if we look either into the Scriptures or into the history of the Church, we shall find that this fact is of a piece with the whole texture of his rule.

After the fall of man the whole world continued long in darkness and fear ere Christ came in the flesh. Darkness covered the earth for many generations before the promised, expected Day-star appeared. Long before Simeon's day prophets were weary with waiting for the Consolation of Israel.

After the incarnation the same feature often appears in his history. He remained thirty years in obscurity at Nazareth before he came forth to make redemption

known. He turned his back for a time on the Syro-phœnician woman who faithfully and fondly followed him. He remained far distant from Bethany while Lazarus his friend was struggling single-handed with the great conqueror of men. He lingered on the mountain-top alone while these Galileans whom he loved so tenderly were toiling against the storm, and losing heart as the darkness fell. At a time when those who had left all to follow him were few and feeble, desponding and almost despairing, he left the world, and returned to heaven. "Thou art a God that hidest thyself." At this day also his people sow in tears, and wonder while they weep why he does not come like the lightning and subdue the nations unto himself. But,—

2. His delay is not proof of neglect. He yearns over a sinning, suffering world, and regards his own with more than a mother's love. His delights were with the children of men before his abode was among them. The visions which godly patriarchs saw were glimpses of his countenance, as he bowed his heavens in longing anticipation before the fulness of time.

When, during his personal ministry, he kept back from the sufferer or the pleader for a time, the motive for the delay was love. Denial made the heathen woman more ardent, and the answer at last more welcome and more full. The keener the appetite, the sweeter the food. Even when of design he remained far from the dying bed of Lazarus, he was occupied, and even oppressed, by a brother's longing love. Once and again with mysterious solemnity he spoke of it to his disciples; and with them,

when the time was come, he hastened to the spot. Having wept over Lazarus as man, he called him from the grave as God. In all this, and especially in the delay, he was carrying out the plans of infinite mercy. Having tried and confirmed the faith of his followers, he also glorified God in the adversaries' sight.

Here, too, in the story of the text, a love at once divine and human was beating in the breast of Jesus, while he prayed alone on that mountain, toward the little band of Galilean fishermen who were battling with the waves on the stormy lake below. He had a purpose to serve by letting them feel the danger: their extremity became his opportunity. A longing for his presence grew that night in their hearts to its fullest measure, and at his appearing their joy was correspondingly full. Blessed are they that hunger; and most blessed are they who hunger most, for they shall be most fully satisfied. Even when, after his resurrection, he ascended into heaven, and left the disciples sorrowing, the act was determined by the same changeless love. Before he departed, he explained with his own lips the reason of his departure: "It is expedient for you that I go away." At the present time, although the whole creation groans, as dumb cattle cry under pain without knowing what ails them, or what would heal, and the new creation intelligently longs, and articulately prays, for his coming the second time without sin unto salvation, still it is love that detains him within the veil. At the set time,—at the best time for the Father's glory and his people's good, he will come. Love to his own keeps him back till all be ready; and when

all is ready, love will urge him on. He will come, and not tarry. As the lightning comes, so will the Son of man come in his glory.

3. Never and nowhere do they who wait upon the Lord wait in vain. Although to weary watchers the time seemed long, the coming was sure. He took our nature, and dwelt among us. He gave at length all her heart's desire to the woman who followed him from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. He visited the sisters at Bethany in their affliction, and gave them back their brother from the grave. He followed these frightened Galileans over the troubled waters, and found them in the dark. Faithful is He that promised ; he also will do it. To them that look for him he will yet come, dispelling by his presence a thicker darkness, and calming a more terrible tempest by his word.

The ordinances of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars, ruling the day and the night, the summer and the winter, are the surest and steadiest things that men in the body know ; to these, therefore, God, their maker, points as marks and measures of his own faithfulness. As his power in creation has never failed, his promises in grace will be all made good.

How safe is a sinful man who has simply, wholly cast himself on Jesus ! The Redeemer loves his own with a love that cannot die. He that keepeth Israel slumbers not nor sleeps. The sun even in his absence holds up the earth all night, and at his coming also brings the day. So Christ keeps a soul intrusted to him while it lies in darkness, and then dawns on that darkness with the

light of life. The love of a Saviour unseen reaches as far and holds as firmly as the law by which central suns grasp tributary worlds. His coming is like the morning ; as sweet and as sure.

Fear not, little flock ; the good Shepherd knows his sheep all by name. He is absent, but he thinks of you. He feels your weight, and bears it. He longs to have you, and will not want you. He remained on the mountain-top only until his disciples fully felt their own need ; and then he brought deliverance. Let none refuse the consolation on the one hand, or the reproof on the other, on the ground that the danger and the deliverance were both seen and temporal things. Our Redeemer became bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, that he might come closer to us, and that we might come closer to him. The transactions of that night on the sea of Galilee and the mountain by its shore reveal the heart of Jesus more clearly than his coming to the world, or his intercession in heaven, because they are bodily human, and palpable to sense. The longing of his human heart that night towards his absent brethren, and his goings, as God, upon the waters to find and save them, mark the line on which his love is running still. The compassion which he felt and the help which he rendered to these poor men are graven here as with a pen of iron and the point of a diamond, that I, in this latter day of time, may know his readiness to pity and ransom me. These lines show how the heart of our Redeemer lies. In that direction his love goes out, and it goes to the uttermost. To-day he is as able and as glad to save from a deeper, darker sea.

II. The disciples' thoughts about Christ.

It was a matter of the heart ; it was a personal affection. Their knowledge of doctrines was very defective. They could not have written the Epistle to the Romans ; they could not at that time have understood it, although it had been written and placed in their hands. In knowledge they were like children ; and like children, too, in single-eyed, confiding love. They were born again, and so saw the kingdom of God ; but they were new-born babes, and therefore could neither give nor take strong meat. The understanding was feeble ; but the life was real, and its instincts true.

They had not chosen him, but he had chosen them. At his call they left all and followed him. When he called the sons of Zebedee from their nets, and Matthew from his tolls, he put forth the same power as when he summoned Lazarus from the grave ; in every instance, and in all alike, it was the mighty power of God. He took possession of their hearts in a mysterious way. His goings were not seen, as he entered his sanctuary, and established his kingdom within his saints. The kingdom came, but not "with observation." Their hearts burned within them as he talked to them by the way. So closely did he draw them to his bosom, that their hearts were inoculated with a love like his own : "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit" (1 Cor. vi. 17). Afterwards they became more enlightened : under the ministry of the Spirit they grew to the stature of perfect men in Christ. But perhaps we would be safe in supposing that the unintelligent love of the new-born is as delightful to

the Lord, in spite of all its blunders, as the most effective service of the most advanced saint. What is wanting in skill is gained in simplicity. The most devoted obedience of a son, in the might of his manhood, does not kindle in a mother a fonder joy than that which thrilled through her, twenty years before, when first she noticed the unconscious babe blindly feeling for her breast. First love seems best love : by leaving it behind, even true disciples greatly grieve their Lord. It was when pride had marred it in the twelve that " Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven " (Matt. xviii. 2, 3).

The operation of this instinct, at the earliest stage of the new life, may be seen in the history of Nicodemus. The new creature was stirring within him, but as yet he scarcely knew what it was. We cannot tell how often in secret he uttered the perplexed question, " Why am I thus ? " and got no other answer than the echo of his own complaint. But while the intelligence as yet was undeveloped, the instinct was strong and true. His faith was weak in degree, but genuine in character. He came at a strange time, but he came to the right person. He had little faith, for he did not venture to come in the daytime ; but he had a right faith, for he came to the Lamb of God that taketh away sin. Those cases that are recorded in Scripture are types, each of its own class ; and each class is represented by living specimens in every age. Some conversions in our day follow the type of Nico-

demus, some that of Lydia, some that of the Philippian jailer. There are diversities of operation under the administration of one Spirit. Little-child conversions are not unfrequent in our day—conversions in which life and love leap into full force at once, while knowledge is left behind, to follow step by step as it may. Grace is sweet when it is young, whatever the age of the natural stock may be on which it is engrafted. The touching tenderness of its youth, though not in its nature better, is better seen when a man is born again after he is old.

Such was the spiritual life of these fishermen. It was feeble, indeed, and unintelligent, but transparent and true. No service rendered by men or angels could be more pleasing to the Lord than that longing for his presence which wrought in the heart of these Galileans, as they toiled to keep their bark afloat in a dark night on a troubled sea. As he knelt on the mountain-top in communion with the Father, he felt these tremblers touching him. This is the want of our day ; and the supply of this want will constitute a revival. We have already a full, correct theology treasured in our books, and accepted by our reason : we need, in addition, the instinctive throbbing of a loving, longing, confiding heart.

Having pointed out that tender, child-like love to Christ which lives as an instinct in true disciples, and acts according to its kind in all circumstances, let us now observe, in particular, how it operates in time of special trial.

The waters were permitted to swell and frighten the children, although their Elder Brother held those waters

in the hollow of his hand. This is a part of his ways, and this part corresponds with the character of the whole. The same Jesus, in far-seeing kindness, tries those who trust him still. Observe now the direction in which a true heart turns in time of need. They manifested no stoical indifference to danger ; they had not iron hearts. In such a case any one of three experiences is possible,—insensibility, despair, and faith. Not to feel the distress is inhuman ; to feel it and sink under it is faithless ; to feel it, and yet bear up, because the Lord is merciful and omnipotent, is Christian. The apostolic precept, borrowed from the Bible of the old covenant Church, articulately denounces both the extremes of evil : “ My son, despise not thou the chastenings of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.” There are two falsehoods ; on either side one, and Jesus in the midst. Those true men would neither, on the one hand, be bold in the absence of their Lord, nor, on the other, faint in fear when he was at their side. Between these two rocks they steered steadily, safely through, conscious of the danger, but counting that all would be well if he were near.

The storm and the darkness made their hearts quiver, and all the more surely, therefore, did these hearts turn, and point toward the mountain-top where Jesus, the daysman, stood laying his hand upon God. I have observed that a shipmaster, especially when the presence of currents and the proximity of land make his burden heavy, shakes the compass sharply, and then watches the point on which the quivering needle finally settles down. The shaking makes the master more sure that the needle

points truly to its pole. In those days the magnet was not known. No trembling compass on the deck that night told the steersman how to hold his helm, after the mountains had disappeared in night; but an instrument more mysterious and equally true within those simple seamen had been once touched by divine, forgiving mercy, and pointed steadfastly now to the Source of saving power. It was not the darkness, but the absence of their Lord in the darkness, of which the men complained. Feeling at his own heart every pulse that throbbed in theirs, Jesus rejoiced in the fond longing for himself which the trial had produced in those little ones. They think not—they say not, If the moon should rise,—if the gale should moderate,—if the harbour were at hand; but, If Jesus were here. Such single-eyed, artless truthfulness is sweet to his taste. No tendency appears in the disciples on this occasion to prescribe to the Lord. They do not seem even to have formed any definite conception in their own minds either as to what they might desire, or he might do. If he does not see meet to change the storm into a calm, and the darkness into light, he will quell their fears, and gladden them with the light of his countenance. The thing they desire is his presence; give them that, and they do not even ask whether he will take them out of trouble, or comfort them in it.

But these dangers, you say, though great, are material and temporal; whereas the dangers which induce us to seek a Saviour are our own sin, and the wages which it wins. Well, if these are the burdens which make you weary, the more welcome will you be to Christ. He

cared for men in all their interests. He cured diseases and pardoned sins. He brought a blessing to the body in order that he might find an open avenue to the soul; and he took it ill when any kept him in the outer court. He was willing to relieve bodily suffering; but he was disappointed when the patient remained content with an external cure. He loves so well to be a Saviour from sin, that he contrives providential openings into the heart of the sinful. Blessed are the common trials that bring the Physician to the door, for he gladly takes every occasion of going in. A weary, longing heart on earth will draw the Lord from heaven; "If any man will open, I will come in."

The example of these Galileans is shown here as in a glass, that every mourner may thereby be encouraged to long for the presence of the Lord. When a deeper sea is heaving underneath, and a thicker darkness closing round you, let your heart go out in truthful, fond desire to the Intercessor who stood then upon the mountain, and stands now on the steps of heaven's throne. He cannot withstand your appeal: he will come, and will not tarry. Over these waters he will walk until he reach you; and when Jesus has come, you are at the land—the very land you had long been making for, but could never see. The moment that the Master comes, the disciples are at home.

A man of strong faith, in the days of old, cried out at the entrance of the dark valley, "I will not fear," giving as the reason of his courage and his comfort, "For thou art with me." Acquaint now thyself with him, and be

at peace ; so, in your extremities, the desires of your soul will go right to Jesus. He feels the touch about his heart, and he needs no other call. See how he was commanded by the message of confiding love, which, like a secret electric current, darted from the members on the sea to their Head upon the mountain. He came at their call, and made them glad by his presence. I take this story as a picture held down from heaven to show us the Lord's way in all times and all places. For what other reason should it be inserted here? No prophecy and no fact of Scripture is of any private interpretation, exhausted by one application, as the grain stalk is cast away when the ripened ear is gathered. The word is not the stalk which is used once and done ; but the seed which multiplies to serve the world in all its breadth, and abides for ever to satisfy the latest generation. It has descended to me. It hangs within my reach. I will take it, and taste it, and trust in God the giver, that the food will be as wholesome as it is sweet. Others like it, older, and yet as fresh, are hanging near : "Call upon me in the day of trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Ps. l. 15).

One thing is needful, and that one thing possessed includes all other good ; "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature." John was in Christ as really and effectually that night on the sea, as when he leant on his Master's breast at supper. It was not necessary to get that union effected after the storm came on : it was completed before, and exercised then. The children of this world are wise in their generation. Telegraph wires,

which unite continent with continent, like nerves of sensation between member and member of the great mundane frame, are laid through intervening seas on the choicest days of summer, and used when the tempest rages, for making known the danger and demanding relief. Nothing is impossible with God ; the line may be laid when the night is darkest and the storm at its height. On Calvary it was so laid between a repenting man and a forgiving Saviour ; but although God has chosen thus to display his power, the man who prefers such a time for seeking salvation is courting his own doom. Now—in youth, in health, in comfort,—now is the time for getting the connection formed ; a day of trial is the time for using it.

Love to Christ in a human heart, kindled there by Christ's love to men, and laying hold in turn of the love that lighted it, is the one thing needful. Mary had it while she sat at Jesus' feet in Bethany : John had it while he struggled along with his comrades to keep his boat afloat in the gale : a multitude whom no man can number have possessed and enjoyed it, in the troubles of life and the terrors of a dying hour. If we are in Christ our weakness becomes our strength ; our sorrow becomes the inlet of a more abounding joy. The dangers which surrounded these fishermen awakened their latent love. Christ, their head, felt its thrill, as instantly and surely as a living man feels the pain of a wound on any extremity of his body. As the man, without loss of time or wavering of purpose, comes with all his might to the defence of a suffering member, Christ in his almighty

grace comes at the cry of the meanest Christian. His power and love are still the same ; and still the same is the need of his disciples. The laws of Nature do not grow feeble as they grow old : they are as fresh to-day as when they first began. They hold up the greatest things with the same strength, and grasp the smallest with the same precision. Nor is love, God's law in the other department of his administration, worn and weary because it has lasted long. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He feels your burdened spirit leaning on his heart to-day, as freshly as he felt the strain of Peter, and James, and John, in the time of their distress. It is not that they had to do with a real, personal, near, and loving Jesus then, and that you have to do with a distant, abstract, unsympathizing spiritual principle to-day ; the same Jesus hears your cry, and feels the clinging of your faith about his heart. A thousand years is with the Lord as one day. In his view there is not, as in yours, a dim distance of dark ages, between the hold that those Galileans took of his love, and the hold that you take of it in your need. In his account, John, and James, and Peter leant on his arm yesterday, and you lean on it to-day. In yourselves you are as needy, and to the Lord you are as welcome as they. He puts himself in your power ; "Lo, I am with you always." Draw, and you will draw him from heaven for your help.

While the ailment of the world at large is its enmity against God, the true want of the Church in the world is the languor of its look unto Jesus. The measure of intensity to which it rises in a time of revival is

marked with very peculiar emphasis in Psalm cxxx.: "My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning; they that watch for the morning." Many of us have learned by experience, at some period of our lives, what it is to long for the morning as if it were life. A ship's company, consisting of two hundred and seventy-six souls, learned it fully in the midst of the Mediterranean one night about eighteen hundred years ago. After thirteen days of continuous tossing, without observations, in a disabled ship, on the fourteenth about midnight the seamen deemed that they drew near to some country. The symptom, detected only by experienced ears, was probably the distant roar of breakers on a rocky shore. By repeated soundings they soon satisfied themselves that their fears were too well founded. The sea was breaking upon rocks, and their unmanageable bark was drifting before the wind right upon the shore. If they could see the land, although they could not now save the ship, they might select the spot that she should dash upon, and select it so as to save their own lives. Then and there, accordingly, with life and death hanging on the chances of their cables holding out the night, "They cast four anchors out of the stern, and wished for the day." That was wishing! Those men looked that night, as if by looking they would draw the dawning from the East before its time.

To them that look for Him thus, will he come; and his coming will be like the morning.

XIX.

THE KINGDOM IN WORD, AND THE KINGDOM
IN POWER.

“For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.”—1 Cor. iv. 20.

THESE words were written in connection with a particular question about discipline, which arose in the Church of Corinth; but they teach a doctrine for all places and all times. This method prevails throughout the Scriptures. The seeds of universal truth grow on the actual incidents of human history. Such a union of the concrete and the abstract is best both for the understanding and the memory. As seed, attached at first to an individual plant and afterwards set free, is carried on the currents of air or ocean to germinate in every land; those apostolic utterances which, in their origin, adhered to persons and places, were cast loose upon the tide of time, that they might grow into fruits of righteousness wherever and whenever they should fall upon a kindly soil. Accordingly, we violate no law in proceeding at once to explain and apply the doctrine which the text contains, without taking further notice of the circumstances from which it sprung. Such a word as this you may sever from the context as freely and as safely as you sever a ripened seed from the withered stalk that bore it. “The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power;” that

truth is the same to us, whatever dispute among the Corinthian converts may have given Paul occasion to record it.

In the New Testament many intimations are made regarding the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven. As to the manner of its advance, it "cometh not with observation;" as to its site, it is within the hearts of its subjects; as to its substance, it is "not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" as to its progress from small beginnings to ultimate greatness, it is like a mustard seed sown in the ground, or leaven hid in the meal. No wonder that the Scriptures have much to say about the kingdom; Christ is its King, Christians its subjects, and the Bible its law; earth is its battle-field, and heaven its home of rest.

Consider—

I. Negatively, and chiefly with a view to doctrinal exposition, What is the distinction between the kingdom in word, and the kingdom in power?

II. Positively, and chiefly with a view to practical application, What is the kingdom in power?

I. What is the distinction between the kingdom in word, and the kingdom in power?

Generally, in regard to this subject, three conditions are possible: True religion, false religion, and no religion; and three corresponding classes actually exist in the world. The truth, accordingly, must be distinguished from two species of antagonists: Idolatry, and Worldliness. In idolatry there is power, but it is not the kingdom of

God; in worldliness the name of the kingdom is admitted, but its power is denied. Briefly, the one is power without the kingdom, the other is the kingdom without the power.

Those of human kind who do not submit to the Lord and his Anointed, branch off into two streams. One division adopts a falsehood, and intrusts it with real power; the other division makes a profession of the truth, but a profession only. Those plainly say, "We will not have this man to reign over us;" these salute him king with their lips, but obey another in their lives. Such are the two constituent streams of the world's great flood; where there is power in religion, Christ is not confessed; where Christ is confessed, there is not power in religion.

In contrast with either form of error, the church of the living God is distinguished by the union of truth and power. Christians proclaim the right King, and render to him a real obedience. False appearances abound. A word-kingdom destitute of power, overspreads the land, and deceives the people. True Christians are much wanted in these days. The world needs them; the Lord needs them.

Our lot has fallen on an age that tends strongly to the material. The spiritual does not occupy a large place in the nineteenth century; neither the human, nor the divine. The mass of mankind gravitate towards matter. It is this that has enabled the Romish Church to obtain a species of revival: it is this that has enabled Romanizers in England to make so much head. The advance is due

not to the aggressor's inherent power, but to the feebleness of the defence. The age, engrossed with matter, did not supply enough of true spiritual food, and the appetite, unsatisfied, fastened greedily on falsehood. In animated nature there is an appetite for both food and drink: food alone will not satisfy. The creatures must have drink; and if you do not supply them with clean water, they will take foul. In like manner there is in human nature a craving for both the material and the spiritual. When in the spiritual department there is a lack of healthful provision, men quench their thirst from poisonous streams. Many of those who venture to sip a little superstition, diluted and toned down to British taste by pretentious Scotch or English apostolics, are caught and carried over ere they are well aware into the rank idolatry of Rome; as many, through an analogous bodily appetite, become in rapid succession tasters, tipplers, drunkards.

The fashion has been to admit without dispute a form of sound words, allowing them a place in our creed, but not a power in our lives. Like bladders full of air, these hereditary professions occupy all the space, and are easily carried. To a great extent the kingdom of God has been owned, but the word which owns it is an empty word. Men will not bear the burden of a real kingdom—will not submit to the authority of a real king. The people of this country, and more especially those who, through birth, or wealth, or political opportunity, occupy its highest places, truly desire to be accounted Christians, and yet few are willing to be servants of Christ. They

hold the truth, but the truth is not permitted to hold them. They remain their own masters, and do not abandon themselves to the will of a superior. They consent to bear and wear true religion as the seemliest moral costume that has ever predominated in any country, or any age; but, in point of fact, they do not permit true religion to grasp their hearts, and guide their lives, and carry them whithersoever it will.

Hence, a characteristic of our Protestant country has been, that while in its high places the kingdom of God is not disowned, it is kept there as a poor relative, without consideration or influence. So good is her title, and so high her birth, that our character would suffer if she were cast out; therefore her presence is endured, and her expenses paid. But she is expected not to interfere in the management of the house, and to keep out of the way when her presence would be disagreeable to the company. Hence the opinion which Papists sincerely entertain, and the reproach which they continually cast on Protestants, that their religion is the nearest possible approach to infidelity. Those who allow falsehood to wield the real power of their life, are acute enough to perceive that we do not so surrender ourselves to the truth which we profess.

In the long run, and in the nature of things, materialism must succumb. Matter yields to spirit, whether the spirit of truth, or the spirit of falsehood. Ideas are more powerful than armies. If spiritual truth is not permitted to animate and control our age and nation, we must lay our account with a slavery to spiritual error. A living

superstition gradually overcomes, and ultimately destroys a lifeless form of sound words, however stately, as ivy first covers, and then casts down the withered stump of the most majestic oak; but the truth in power withstands and throws back all the assaults of falsehood, as the great and growthful tree keeps down, or kills off the parasite that tried to climb its stem. Our conflict is not with flesh and blood; it is with "spiritual wickedness in high places." On that battle-field, and against that adversary, our mechanical superiority is not available: we shall lose the day unless we can oppose to spiritual falsehood spiritual truth.

II. What is the kingdom in power?

1. The *instrument* of this power is revealed Truth. Although the word may be present without power, wherever the power is put forth, it employs the word as its instrument: although the letter is sometimes dead, it is by that letter, when it lives, that all the real work is done. The Scriptures, in relation to the kingdom of God, constitute the lade which contains and conveys the water. That channel does not put forth the power which propels the machinery; but, without it, the machinery could not be propelled. In this Protestant land, many men and women, old and young, are like water wheels standing still, with well-cut dry channels abutting on the buckets. The channels are useless, and yet not useless. They cannot act instead of water; but they are precious to hold and convey the water when it comes. When the Spirit is poured out like floods upon the dry

ground, the activity and fruitfulness of the church in this country will be very great, because of the scriptural education which prevails. Let not the diggers of these channels weary of the work, or intermit the longing look to heaven for the shower which will make the work effectual: pains and prayers are our part, and a "faithful Creator" is ready to perform his own.

2. The *essence* of the power is Christ. Christ crucified is "the power of God" (1 Cor. i. 24). Here is the fountain-head of all the force, which, through the preaching of the truth, can be brought to bear upon the hearts and lives of men. The word and ordinances stand ready to convey the power, but the redemption that is in Christ is the power which must be led to men's hearts, and let on. If this do not move them, they will never be moved. Unless the love of Christ constrain a man to yield himself unto God, he will, without restraint, give himself over to work all iniquity with greediness.

This power moves man, not God. Those who deny or dislike the atonement, cannot see, or will not observe this plain distinction. The doctrine of substitution, they say, represents God as a monarch destitute of mercy, refusing pardon to the sinful, until the blood of the innocent has appeased his wrath. They think that in the evangelical system, the blood of Christ is represented as the power that moves God to forgive sin. There could not be a greater mistake. By turning the truth upside down they have turned it into a lie. The atonement offered by Christ is not the cause, but the effect of God's mercy. God is love; and the gift of his Son is the

greatest out-flow from that fountain-head. Infinitely, eternally, unchangeably merciful, the one living and true God would have been although no substitute had suffered, and no sinner been redeemed. Mercy provided the sacrifice, in order that divine righteousness might be honoured, and the sinful forgiven.

Thus the atonement constitutes the power, by opening a way through which the love of a just God may reach the unjust. There is no winning power in the terror of the Lord. That end of the magnet repels; and yet an attractive virtue lies in the magnet. In the gospel of his Son the just God turns his forgiving love towards sinful men. Those who are caught by the unseen current are drawn near and held fast. All the principalities and powers of heaven and earth could not separate them "from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." You might as soon break the cord that holds a planet in its path, as that which keeps saved men hanging upon God their Saviour.

3. The *application* of the power is effected by the ministry of the Spirit. Before his own ascension, our Lord promised the Spirit, and explained the nature of his work; "He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." At the day of Pentecost the promise was conspicuously fulfilled. Then the kingdom came in power to a multitude who had previously known it in word only. From that day to this, with a ministry sometimes silent and invisible as the dew, and sometimes terrible as a tempest, the same Spirit has been working in the world. When the enemy comes in

like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord lifts up a standard against him. Thus Christ's kingdom is maintained until he come again.

4. The *effects* of this power are great and various.

(1.) It Subdues. At the set time the boldest rebel must bow before it. It seizes Saul on his way to Damascus, and in a moment lays him prostrate on the earth. It makes him blind, and again gives him light. It strips him of his own righteousness, and forthwith clothes him in another. The soldier is compelled to change his side, and without even putting off his armour marches under another Captain to fight another foe. The conquest, as might have been expected, is more complete than any which earthly powers can achieve. Those who can look only on the outward appearance must be content with bodily service ; but it is the peculiar attribute of this kingdom to bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. x. 5). The whole man is reckoned a fortress in revolt, and the multitude of his thoughts the teeming population : by a resistless onset the king takes possession of the place, and all the defenders fall into his hands. Thoughts are arrested as well as actions : the will is conquered, and the life accordingly turned at its source. Other monarchs rule men's actions ; Christ is King of thoughts.

(2.) It Comforts. The child Jesus is set both for the fall and the rising again of all his own (Luke ii. 34). It was a true instinct that stirred in believing men when they said in a time of trouble, " Come, and let us return unto the Lord ; for he hath torn, and he will heal us ;

he hath smitten, and he will bind us up" (Hosea vi. 1). When a man has been taught by the Spirit to count his own righteousness filthy rags, he soon hears a still small voice saying, "Take away the filthy garments from him, I will clothe thee with change of raiment" (Zech. iii. 4). When the law of God in the conscience has quenched the light of nature's confidence, blessed hope, kindled by a spark from heaven, soon begins to struggle, like smoking flax, in the desolated breast. It is a characteristic grace of the King that he will not quench it: he will cherish it till it burst into a flame. It is a wonderful display of divine power in the cross of Christ that it can make a sinner sing when the judgment-seat is near, without hiding either his own unworthiness or the righteousness of God. It is as much the peculiar prerogative of royalty to make peace, as to declare war. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you." These are kingly words; only One has the right to use them.

(3.) It levies Tribute. This is the sure mark of a real kingdom. In the days of James VI. the actual monarch of Britain claimed to be also king of France. "King of Great Britain, France, and Ireland" was his title. The iron and miry clay are mingled there. In France his kingdom consisted in word only; in Britain and Ireland it came in power. Here tribute flowed into the royal treasury from every portion of the country, and from all classes of the people; there not a penny was paid. Christ's kingdom, wherever it is real, puts forth the taxing power. Tribute bearing the image and superscription

of earthly kings flows into its treasury to maintain its machinery and extend its bounds; but the self of the subject is the coin in which the King best likes the tribute to be paid. When a question regarding the royal revenue comes up for solution, the demand is not, Show me a penny, but, Show me a renewed man. Whose image and superscription hath he? God's, for into that blessed likeness he has been restored in the regeneration. Render, therefore, unto God the things that are God's: yield yourselves as instruments of righteousness, whereby the operations of the kingdom may be carried on: ye are not your own: he who bought you claims not only yours, but also you.

With a view to a suitable lesson with personal application at the close, I now request you to examine impartially whether the kingdom of God within yourselves is a word merely, or a supreme power. It is certain that our spirits are subject to a controlling power as well as our bodies. We are all under authority. A kingdom in word cannot cast out the strong man who holds hereditary sway in the sinful. The substance of the kingdom of darkness is more powerful than the shadow of the kingdom of light. If we have not been made free by yielding to the kingly power of Christ, we are still in bondage to the god of this world. The question is not, Which spirit of the legion rules you? Covetousness, pride, envy, and a long list of kindred lusts, are ranged on one side, while Christ stands alone on the other. If any of these still maintain a controlling power in your heart, the allegiance

professed with the lip to another King will avail you nothing.

The body of a man cannot maintain an independent place in the material world; it must lie with all its weight on something greater than itself. The earth grasps us by the law of gravity, and holds us helplessly on its surface. Constant and complete is the control which this kingdom of nature exercises over us. Although the earth on which we stand were dissolved, and reduced to nothing, a man could not physically be a world for himself. Other bodies in space would attract him according to their nearness and their bulk. Although he were left at first in equilibrium on the border line between two worlds, one would soon obtain preponderance. Towards it he would fall, and on it he would lie, unless and until a greater force should remove him.

The spirit of man is subject as much as the body, although its subjection is not a seen thing. The human soul is not, and cannot be, a god unto itself: by necessity of nature it must worship another: around some spiritual centre it must revolve. It may be that some are, in point of fact, for a time hovering on the confines of two opposite worlds. The kingdom of light may have begun to grasp, while the kingdom of darkness has not yet let go the man. Two real powers—the power of God and the power of evil—are contending for possession. The captive of the one or of the other must a human spirit be. There is such a thing as a borderer halting between these two kingdoms; but he does not halt always—he does not halt long there. While he stands quivering in the

balance, sensible that redeeming love is drawing, but refusing to throw himself absolutely over into its power, the world holds him yet by a bond unbroken, and will suck back into its bosom all its own.

What is your position, brother? It is not enough to say that you are not wallowing in the mire of manifold lusts; you may be far removed from the vicious, and yet be as completely subject to the same spiritual power. The men who soar in a balloon among the clouds are as perfectly controlled by the earth's attraction as the men who heavily trudge on foot along the miry road below; soon, and perhaps suddenly, the lofty will be on a level with the low. Such, and no greater, is the difference between the more and the less reputable of those who live without God in the world. The movement upward from the earth, which is made by aid of earth's own powers and laws, will neither go far nor last long: if you are not caught and carried off by a power in heaven, the earth will soon have you on its bosom again. As long as a soul remains in the power of its old centre, a few degrees more or less of elevation in the standard of conventional morality will not decisively affect the final issue. A word will not avail. The kingdom that does not exert supreme controlling power is not a kingdom. In whose power does the soul actually lie? On that hinge turns all our time—all our eternity.

If the sun, while its grasp of the earth by gravity remained the same, were otherwise so changed that all its rays should be darts of death, the only hope for our world would be to escape from the sway of the destroyer. A

method of deliverance can be at least conceived easily. Let the suffering planet forsake its orbit, and flee toward some other of the suns that people space ; it would then revolve round another centre, and bask in another light. The passage of a human spirit from the power of Satan into the kingdom of God is a real event, as great and as decisive as the supposed transference of a peopled planet to the sphere of another sun. If there should not be in all cases the power of precisely observing and recording the moment when the border line between death and life is crossed, there ought at least to be a well-defined and clearly seen distinction between living under the power of darkness and a translation into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

On the Sabbath, when you leave your labour behind, and worship with your fellows in the house of prayer, or in the silence of night within your own dwelling, when you kneel alone to pray, which kingdom retains the control of your heart? Does the love of Christ hold you, as the sun holds this planet in its power? If the new kingdom has not gotten the command, the old kingdom has not lost it. A kingdom in word cannot wrench you from the grasp of this world's god. The word of the kingdom may tingle in your ears every Sabbath for a lifetime, and you, nevertheless, lie in the wicked one. There is only one way of deliverance, and that is by a simple and unreserved personal surrender to the power of Christ's kingdom—to Christ its King.

Whether do you keep Christ in your power or lie in his? Strange question, you will say ; how could we keep

Christ in our power although we would? True, you cannot ascend into heaven and drag Messiah from his throne; but those who are determined to have Christ at their disposal take not the power but the word, and make it lie where it will disturb them least. Some persecutors, when the victim is beyond their reach, dress and execute his effigy. Thus some who are called Christians treat Christ. They keep a lifeless image which bears his name, leaving it outside the door while they entertain company within, and subjecting it to a thousand indignities. The name and the garb they will endure, but not the life or power. In order to carry out a certain political system, the British Government maintained a personage at Delhi in royal state, with royal titles; but they crushed their own creature as soon as he tried to be a real king. It is thus that the same persons who bow the knee and cry, Hosanna! before the Christian religion, crucify Christ because he claims to be a King. The struggle of rebellion is painful; but simple, trustful, loyal obedience is sweet. Those who have surrendered without reserve to the Redeemer's claim of sovereignty, bear witness willingly that his yoke is easy and his burden light.

XX.

GODLY SORROW, AND ITS PRECIOUS FRUIT.

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of.”—
2 COR. vii. 10.

HERE godly sorrow and repentance stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. We shall consider them in their order, following each into its subordinate branches and practical results:—

- I. The godly sorrow which works repentance.
- II. The repentance which godly sorrow works.

I. Godly sorrow ; Its nature, and its origin.

1. The nature of godly sorrow. As long as my audience consists of human beings in the body, it is not necessary to explain what is meant by sorrow. Every one knows, but none can tell, what it is. The heart knoweth its own bitterness. Men are born to trouble at first, and exercised in it all their days. There is a cry at the beginning of life, and a groan at its close.

Sorrow, the generic, is known to all ; the specific, godly sorrow, needs definition and description. We habitually and universally assume that all understand what is meant by a flower : we never define it. The genus is so common, and so widely spread over the earth, that every human being is familiar with its name and nature. But

there are some species of flowers which few have ever seen, and which the more experienced, accordingly, describe to the multitude. In order to convey an accurate conception of a rare exotic, it is usual to compare and contrast it with some plant that is common and indigenous. The new species is best understood when we have learned wherein it is like, and wherein it is unlike one that is found on every wayside.

It is thus that we must deal with godly sorrow, a precious seed brought from heaven to human hearts, and struggling through an unkindly soil. In the immediate context it is directly contrasted with a commoner kind, called "the sorrow of the world." Although affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground (Job v. 6); yet sorrows do spring in the lot of man, a braird as thick and close and constant as the grass. The low-growing species, godly sorrow, may be found here and there on the plain, rarer and sweeter than violets among the herbage of summer.

The sorrow of the world, though it seem a thick homogeneous covering over all human life, is yet made up of as many different kinds as that carpet of green which covers the earth. Here, it is chiefly the pain of a diseased body; and there, the eating canker of a discontented mind. At one time the loss of property, at another the loss of friends, is the more immediate cause of grief. Some are distressed because they cannot get this world's good, and others because they must soon part with that which they have gotten. These and all other kinds of grief which have respect only to the present life, are slumped together,

and denominated "the sorrow of the world," although they consist of kinds various and numerous as the herbs that clothe the ground. Alone, on the other side, and in contrast with them all, stands that one peculiar species, "sorrow towards God." It is like the rest, inasmuch as it is sorrow: it is unlike the rest, inasmuch as it springs, not out of the sufferer's connection with the earth and time, but out of his connection with God and eternity.

The expression clearly intimates that the attitude of the soul must be changed ere it can be sensible of this sorrow. Away from the world, with its hopes and fears, the man must turn, and open his inmost being towards God. Let the Father of our spirits come into immediate communion with the spirit which he has made. The creature, absorbed by the presence of its Maker, becomes in a manner unconscious of temporal things. He has been lifted up, in spirit, from the earth, so that for the time its attractions and repulsions do not sensibly affect him. He is alone with God; and God is near. Now, what will the sensation be in that human heart? It is not love, pure and full, as of angels and spirits of men made perfect; it is not despairing hate like that of devils; it is,—if the communion which has begun be with the Father, through the Son, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit,—it is *sorrow*; but it is a sorrow diverse from all the sorrows of the world. It is a new thing. It is an affection which the carnal mind never knew. It is in no sense or measure dependent on the good things of this world. The want of them will not produce it; the possession of them will not take it away.

When the human spirit has been led aside into the Father's presence,—when a conference is held on the border between the tenant of time and eternity's Almighty Lord, old things that were wont to control the emotions are left behind, and new things from the other side come in to mould with supreme authority the affections and the will. Towards God,—when the soul is turned in that direction, and the Father's countenance, like the sun in his strength, shines directly in,—towards God there would be no sorrow, if there were no sin. Sometimes in our latitudes vapours rising from the ground, and hanging in the atmosphere, change the white brightness of the sun into a jaundiced yellow or a fiery red. A shade that seems to take the mirth out of both man and beast then lies upon the world. Thus passions, issuing like mist from the soul itself, darken the face of God, hiding his tenderness, and permitting only anger to glance through.

It depends on the work of the Spirit in the man whether the result of that disturbance shall be dislike of God's holiness, or sorrow for his own sin. One of these it must be. When with a broken, teachable heart you turn in that direction, you will attribute the dimness to its true cause. You find fault, not with God because there is a frown on his countenance, but with yourself, because your sins have hid his face. When the sun is half-hidden, and the rays that do penetrate are of a livid, lurid hue, we know well, we know all that there is nothing the matter with the sun—that the sole reason of the dimness and dread is the vapour that springs from the earth, and hovers near its surface. If we were as knowing and as

true in spiritual as we are in natural affairs, we would understand, and confess, and feel, that when a human heart is turned toward God its own sin is the only impediment to peace. Our concern, our dislike, our revenge would be directed, not against the Holy One who refuses to smile upon the impure, but against our own impurities, which bar the approaches of his love. The resulting emotion would be, not impotent enmity upward, but sorrow turned in.

We approach here the very hinge of the difference between the carnal and the spiritual mind. The one is enmity against God for his righteousness; the other, sorrow for its own sin. Two persons, imbued respectively with these opposite spirits, may both be painfully sensible of an obstruction preventing peaceful communion between themselves and God: the one is sorry that the Judge will not come down to his standard; the other, that his own attainments have not been brought up to the standard of the Judge. The true wish of the one man's heart is, that there were less of holiness in God; the true wish of the other man's heart is, that there were more in himself. The two griefs and the two desires lie as far apart from each other as light and darkness,—as life and death.

2. We shall be better able to understand what sorrow towards God is, if we proceed now to examine more exactly how it is produced. Its immediate cause will throw light upon its specific character.

A cognate text in Rom. ii. 4 will help us here. These two allied but distinct intimations may be placed in parallel lines, and treated like an equation; thus:—

“The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance.”

“Godly sorrow worketh repentance.”

We learn, as the result of the comparison, that the goodness of God leads to repentance by the way of godly sorrow. The series of cause and effect runs thus : goodness of God ; godly sorrow ; repentance. The same conclusion is brought out with much fuller illustration in a preceding section of the same epistle. Perhaps there is no other portion of Scripture in which the goodness of God is more articulately pronounced, or more vividly displayed. “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing ; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (vi. 17, 18). In the next verse (vii. 1) we learn what effects are expected to spring from such an outpouring of paternal tenderness : “Having, therefore, these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” The undeserved and unexpected display of fatherly kindness penetrates like sunlight into the dark chambers of an alienated heart. That heart, thereupon, startles and stands aghast at its own pollutions. It is amazed at its own ingratitude, now discovered. Its instant, instinctive, vehement cry is, “Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness.” This is a most instructive example, in the moral department, of effect following cause. The sorrow for sin was not felt until God’s goodness aroused it ; and that sorrow once aroused, instantly manifests true repentance, in an eager effort to put sin away.

Nothing will make us turn until we be grieved for our sins ; and nothing will make us grieve for our sins but the goodness of God. Do not mistake ; a fear of hell is not sorrow for sin : it may be nothing more than a regret that God is holy. Dread of punishment may indeed be employed to produce the commotion in which a purer affection begins, but in itself it neither pleases God nor purifies man. As an instrument wherewith the peace of spiritual death may be disturbed, the Lord employs it, and, therefore, we should neither despise nor discard it ; but it lies very low, and cannot carry us far in an upward movement. It is worthless unless it quickly merge in the higher, and truer, and purer, affection—sorrow for sin. When a man, touched by God's goodness, takes God's side with his whole heart, as against himself in the matter of his own guilt,—this is the turning point.

I am aware that some will acquiesce in this exposition as far as it goes, and complain that precisely at the place where it stops their difficulty lies. They know that to themselves belongs sin, and to God righteousness. They know that they ought to be grieved for the wickedness of their own hearts, but in point of fact they are not grieved. They would like to possess this godly sorrow, but they do not possess it. They cannot attain it. What shall be done for these ? How shall you comfort them ?

I shall not try to comfort them. Their complaint about the want of godly sorrow, and their expressed desire to attain it, is in most cases, I suspect, rank self-deceiving. They have admitted into their understandings the knowledge that this grace of the Spirit is necessary ;

but this grace of the Spirit their hearts do not desire ; for if they desired it, they would obtain it. The promise is absolute, Ask, and ye shall receive. The Promiser is true ; the lie will be found on the other side.

Look to the expression ; it is not merely the generic sorrow ; it is the specific "sorrow toward God." They who do not turn in that direction cannot possibly experience that sorrow. It is like Nelson's bold expedient at Copenhagen, when holding the telescope to his blind eye, he declared he did not see the signal for retreat, and pressed forward to the battle. If you keep the seeing eye of your soul open upon the world, and turn a blind eye towards God, whatever emotions may be kindled by the aspect of temporal things, towards God there will be neither grief nor joy. It is mere hypocrisy to complain that you are not tenderly affected by the sight of certain objects, if on these objects you seldom look, and never gaze.

Suppose I were shut up within a round tower, whose massive wall had in some time of trouble been pierced here and there for musketry ; suppose, further, that, by choice or necessity, I am whirled rapidly and incessantly round its inner circumference, will I appreciate the beauties of the surrounding landscape, or recognise the features of the men who labour in the field below ? I will not. Why ? Are there not openings in the wall which I pass at every circuit ? Yes ; but the eye, set for objects near, has not time to adjust itself to objects at a distance until it has passed the openings ; and so the result is the same as if it were a dead wall all round. Behold the circle of

human life ! of the earth earthy it is, almost throughout its whole circumference. A dead wall very near and very thick obstructs the view. Here and there, on a Sabbath or other season of seriousness, a slit is left open in its side. Heaven might be seen through these ; but, alas, the eye which is habitually set for the earthly cannot, during such momentary glimpses, adjust itself to higher things, Unless you pause and look steadfastly, you will see neither clouds nor sunshine through these openings on the distant sky. So long has the soul looked upon the world, and so firmly is the world's picture fixed in its eye, that when it is turned for a moment heavenward, it feels only a quiver of inarticulate light, and retains no distinct impression of the things that are unseen and eternal.

Those who devote all their time and energy to the affairs of this life, and complain that they cannot attain a vivid sense of sin, are deceiving themselves. Be as diligent in this business as in others, and you will succeed as well. If you bestow only languid, superficial, momentary thoughts upon your greatest interests, you have no right to expect that they will prosper.

Moreover, when you do turn your mind, and turn intently, toward God, you must open on his goodness. His wrath, when you gaze on it, may make you afraid of punishment, but has no power to make you sorry for sin. So hard is a heart long accustomed to evil, that nothing can melt it but goodness ; and no goodness but God's ; and no goodness of his but the greatest. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift. "Looking unto Jesus" is the grand specific for producing godly sorrow in a human

heart. It was a hard heart that quivered under the beams of his loving eye on the threshold of Pilate's judgment hall. When Jesus looked on Peter, Peter went out and wept. Emmanuel's love has lost none of its melting power; the hardest hearts laid fairly open to it, must ere long flow down. God's goodness, embodied in Christ crucified, becomes, under the ministry of the Spirit, the cause of godly sorrow in believing men. "Consider Him;" it is by meditating much on the stupendous cure which divine mercy has provided that you will learn to estimate aright the depth of the disease. Sweet sense of pardon has, as its other side, bitter grief for sin. Mere sweetness soon palls upon the taste: acids sweetened give more lively and more lasting pleasure. To a thirsty soul cold water conveys a measure of delight which is not inherent in its own nature. Sinners forgiven must relish a holy heaven, in a manner and measure which unfallen angels do not know. "Thou hast washed us from our sins in thy blood" gives zest to the songs of heaven. Such and so great a gladness they could not have enjoyed unless they had tasted grief.

II. The repentance which godly sorrow produces. It is a change of mind which imparts a new direction to the whole life, as the turning of the helm changes the course of the ship. God's goodness, flashing in upon the heart, made it ashamed of its own rebellion; this shame, so produced, turns the whole being round; the life so turned flows amain in the channel of obedience.

Two things are said in the text about this turning:

1, It is unto salvation ; and 2, It is not to be repented of.

1. It is "repentance unto salvation." The man's former course led to perdition ; it has been reversed, and therefore now leads to life.

Conversion is a common word in our language, and in our day. It means a turning,—that radical, and total, and permanent revolution in human life, which, beginning with conviction of sin in the heart, issues in pardon and holiness. In time of war a feeble pioneer band is feeling its way forward in a hostile country. Their own belief, taken up at hazard in the absence of information, and confirmed by the cunning of hostile spies, is that the path which they follow will lead to safety. Suddenly, and almost too late, a faithful messenger meets them with the decisive report that the enemy in force is immediately in front, and that a few paces more will plunge them into the jaws of death. They halt, wheel round, and retrace their steps. They never swerve from the track, and never lie down to rest until they reach, and touch, and are absorbed again into the mighty army of their king ; as a detached drop, trickling down a blade of grass, gently, safely disappears when it comes in contact with the stream.

We are dealing here with matters on which our own life or death eternal depends ; it behoves us to understand clearly, and speak plainly. All men are at the first and by nature moving downward through sin to death, as rivers flow toward the sea ; unless we turn we shall die. In the words of our Chief Teacher : "Except a

man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." As surely as the waters, once disengaged from the mountain, find their way to the sea, so surely do the tastes and habits of the fallen gravitate farther and farther out from God. It is only when that course is absolutely arrested and turned back that the wanderer enters the path of life. It is the turning round that becomes salvation. They who turn not are not saved: "turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die?"

2. It is a "repentance not to be repented of." The change is decisive and final. Your attitude is fixed, your portion chosen for life,—for ever. When in godly sorrow you have turned your face to Christ, and consequently your back on all that grieves him, you will never need to make another change; you will never repent of that repentance.

This seems so obvious that we are surprised to find it formally expressed. Perhaps the design is to suggest silently other choices which must be repented of. Many turns are made in life which demand another turning. That turning was "unto salvation;" there was no salvation in any other. They turned and lived; this one is the last, although the pilgrim after making it should sojourn on earth a hundred years. There may be many crooks in the Christian's lot, but there will henceforth be no turning in his path till he reach his happy home. That youth who closed with Christ before his disease began, whose eyes are beaming with hope on the verge of the grave, whose feeble lips are framing themselves into a smile as the spirit is departing, does

not then and there repent of his repentance. Falsehood is manifold; truth is single. Idols are a multitude; God is one. Each cistern that a thirsty soul turns to, is another that he must turn from, until he taste the fountain of living water. He who drinks the water that Christ gives him shall never thirst again.

The saved, as he enters among the undefiled, washed like them in the blood of the Lamb, and takes his place unchallenged in the circle of those that stand round the throne, does not rue the choice he made, and the point it turned on, and the new path it opened, when, yet in his youth, melted by God's goodness, he sorrowed for sin and sought the Saviour,—when in the soul's inmost thought, and the lip's bold confession, and the life's resolute course, in spite of indolence within and scorers without, he turned his back on a tempting world, and fully thenceforth followed the Lord. That turning was salvation, and he never needed to turn again.

It is recorded of a man, that in the body on the earth he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears. In heaven it will be equally impossible to find a place of repentance, with this difference that none will seek one there. Considering how many repentings are in human life, and how painful they are, it is a gladsome feature of the better land that it knows them not for ever. Even the last great turning of the saved, although a salutary, was a painful change. Birth pangs give sorrow, though they usher in life. To discover danger and rue the past is agony to a human soul. These experiences lead to safety, but they do

not constitute rest. In the rest that remaineth these turnings will no more be known. In the aggregate of human suffering on earth how large a portion consists of regrets! A correspondingly important element in the joy of the redeemed is that they will have none. Even in man's best estate here, the review of each day as it fades away into the past, supplies material of new repentings. But as one object very near you hides from view a thousand that lie behind, this grace of the Spirit—"repentance unto life"—lies so close and bulks so largely in the eyes of the risen saints when they look back toward the world, that it covers the manifold minor regrets which dotted all their history. The repentance which led unto salvation is the only repentance which the saved see in the memory of the past, and of that repentance they will never, never repent. Never in earth or in heaven will Christians repent of that turning which, whatever it tore them from, brought them to Christ. It is a pressing practical thing. How close it comes!—how great it is! To you, brother, is the word of this salvation sent. This day Christ, and in him pardon and eternal life, are offered free to you. Close with this offer without reserve, without delay. Come to Christ, letting go all that you cannot carry into his bosom. This choice,—this turning, in time or eternity, you will never rue.

XXI.

THE LAW AND THE CONSCIENCE :—THEIR
QUARREL MADE UP.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”—Amos iii. 3.

ONE of those unanswered questions which sound forth from the Bible like the thunders of Sinai, and whose echoes grumble long in the hollow caverns of an unclean conscience. A question answered is like a hungry child that has gotten its food; it is silenced and set aside; but a question which you cannot answer keeps you on the rack. It haunts your memory in hours of solitude. It crosses the path of pleasure, and shakes its grim head like a spectre in your face, demanding what you cannot give—a *reply*.

There must be a reason why questions are put in the Bible, and not answered there. It is intended that each learner should sit down, and, by the analogy of faith applied to his own experience, work out an answer for himself. Some of the problems are easy, if we were willing to have them solved; others are difficult, even to anxious inquirers. May the Holy Spirit, who put this question in the text, lead us to the truth, which will supply an “answer in peace!”

The question arises out of a particular case in the experience of Israel; but it is expressed in a general form, and contains a rule of universal application: “Can

two walk together"—any two, at any time—"except they be agreed?" I wish to apply the question at present to two who have necessarily much intercourse on subjects of the weightiest moment—*God's law* and *man's conscience*.

The first question is, How they fell out; and the second, How they fell in again. Sin is the cause of the quarrel; and righteousness by faith is the way to peace.

I. The disagreement.

II. The reconciliation.

I. The Disagreement. Notice separately and successively the Fact and its Consequences.

1. The Fact that there is an alienation. God's law is his manifested will for the government of his creatures. It is the reflection cast down on earth of his own holiness. It is holy, and just, and good; it is perfect as its Author; it knows of no compromise; it cannot bend, by a hair's-breadth, to keep a whole world of human kind from sinking into everlasting perdition. Observe the steadfastness of God's laws, as applied to material things. The ocean is under law to God, and by that law it would engulf the whole human race, without swerving from its even course, if they were cast upon it without protection. This is God's law, and his laws are all sure; they are not "yea, yea, and nay, nay." His moral law, ruling spirits, is as inexorable as his physical law, ruling matter. It knows of no yielding, no compunction. The ocean would

submerge a million of men, and the next moment its waves would roll and play in the same regular succession as before ; there would be no staggering of resolution, no change of purpose. He who made the sea may miraculously walk on its waves and stretch out his hand to the perishing ; but the sea's law is changeless and pitiless. If another million should be thrown upon the water, they would be swallowed up in the same way. Such also is God's law for moral beings ; it has no softness for indulged sins. Yourselves may have a partiality for them, and think it hard that wrath should come upon them to the uttermost ; but the law of God does not participate in that tenderness for favourite lusts. It meets you there like the ocean : "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." It never changes, and never repents. If you sin and perish, its waves roll over you unchanged, to meet the next comer with the same demand : "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die.*" The law never saved a sinner ; if it did, it would be no longer a law. If it softened and yielded at any one point, it were absolutely annulled. If any sin or any sinner is allowed to pass, where is the justice of punishing any sin or any sinner ? To bend any commandment for the accommodation of a defaulter is to blot out the law. The law, by its very nature, can have no partialities and no compunctions. It never saves those who transgress ; and never weeps for those who perish. It is hard for a man with warm life in his body to sink beneath the waves, and struggle a while, and be choked, and die in the deep unseen ; yet though the case is pitiable, no one expects

that the sea will become pitiful, and shrink back, refusing to be the executioner. So God's other law knows no relenting ; transgressors are reckoning without their host when they expect to escape by its softness in that day.

The conscience in man is that part of his wonderful frame that comes into closest contact with God's law—the part of the man that lies next the fiery law, and feels its burning. When first the conscience is informed and awakened, it discovers itself *guilty*, and the law *angry*. There is not peace between the two, and, by the constitution of both, they are neighbours. They touch at all points, as the air touches the earth or the sea ; neither the one nor the other can avoid the contact. There is need of peace in so close a union ; but there is not peace. The first exclamation of the awakened conscience, on the discovery of the law, is, "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy?" "The commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. vii. 9). The conscience is pierced by the law, the sharp arrow of the Lord ; and the convicted feels himself a lost, a dead man. The law's enmity against a guilty moral being is intense and total ; it cannot otherwise be. The enmity of a guilty moral being against the holy law that condemns him is intense and total ; it cannot otherwise be. Where there is mutual hatred, distance may diminish its intensity ; but where the antagonists are forced into contact, the nearness exasperates the hate. Oh, who can measure, who can describe the disagreement between the guilty violator of God's law and that law which condemns him ? Who knoweth the power of the Judge's wrath, or of the culprit's enmity ? Who has ever

confessed, even to himself, the degree of his hatred to God's law in all its length and breadth—that law which haunts him through life, dogs his steps in the dark valley, and confronts him in the judgment—that enemy which embitters all the pleasures of sin, which deepens the darkness of the grave, and quenches the hope for eternity? It is a great quarrel that has broken out between a guilty conscience and a holy law.

2. The Consequence of this disagreement between the two is, *they cannot walk together*. Let us see what this means in the case before us. Enmity tends to produce distance. The law, indeed, remains what it was, and where it was; but the offending and fearing conscience seeks, and, in one sense, obtains a separation. The conscience cannot bear the burning contact of a condemning law, and forcibly pushes it away: "depart from me, for I desire not the knowledge of thy ways." The conscience with the law is like the wicked king with the true prophet (2 Chron. xviii. 7): "I hate him; for he never prophesied good unto me, but always evil." As when a little child, afloat in his tiny boat, angrily bids the dry land depart, and pushes it away; lo! it goes—it seems to go. The feeble effort of the child was sufficient to move himself away from the land; but he is persuaded all the while that the land has removed from him. So, the conscience by instinct pushes against the law, and having pushed itself away into greater indifference, is glad of the comparative relief.

But *distance is disobedience*. To walk with the law, is to live righteously; not to walk with the law, is to

live in sin. Where love is the fulfilling of the law, hate and distance must be the highest disobedience. The Judge looketh on the heart; and whatever the outward conduct may be, the life of one who is thus at variance with the law is a life of sin.

There are certain special features of the disagreement in this case that aggravate the breach and increase its effects.

(1.) The party who has *injured* another *hates* that other most heartily, and cannot afford to forgive. The injurer must foment the quarrel; it is his only source of relief. The one who receives the injury does not feel the necessity of keeping distant; but the one who inflicts it must fan the flame; and if there be not real repentance and confession, he does fan the flame. The guilty conscience is the offender, and in proportion to the sense of guilt is his exasperation against the law. It continues increasing until the hard heart gives way, and flows down like water at the presence of the Lord. The wrongdoer is miserable when he whom he has injured is near.

(2.) Another circumstance that makes companionship impossible is, when on one or both sides there is not only the memory of a past grudge, but also *the purpose of a future injury*. In considering how much the law exasperates a guilty conscience, we must take into account not only what it has said, but also what it will yet do. It will retain the record of all. It will appear as witness and accuser. You know that it will accuse you without mercy. It will not hide one transgression in order to save you. You know that the law is your enemy, and that it will be inexorable and unbending if

the day of your extremity should come. This makes you hate the law with a perfect hatred. Besides knowing that you have injured it, you know that it will bring up all against you. While the law and you are in this relation, you cannot love it. You put it away from you with all the strength and steadfastness of an instinctive aversion. You may all the while be speaking respectfully of the law, and even, in a form of words, saying or singing that you love it ; but it is only the trembling captive, flattering and fawning on the tyrant who has life and death in his power. If that captive were placed beyond the tyrant's reach, he would change his tone and defy his foe. As is the love of the helpless prisoner to the conqueror who shakes a naked sword above his head, such is the love of an unreconciled soul to the law that denounces Jehovah's wrath against all iniquity. To love either the law, or God its Author, while you are still under condemnation, is a natural impossibility ; and in these circumstances the profession of love is false. "I love the Lord," on the lips of the unforgiven being interpreted by the Searcher of hearts, means, I am not able to overcome God, and therefore I shall try to deceive him. What a dreadful state to be in ! and yet that is the state of every unreconciled, unrenewed man. "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ?" We shall see. Consider now—

II. The Reconciliation. On this side, too, the Fact and its Consequences may and should be separately explained.

1. The Nature of the Reconciliation, and the Means of

attaining it. The agreement between the law and the conscience is a part of the great reconciliation between God and man, which is effected in and by Jesus Christ. He is our peace. Peace of conscience follows in the train of justification.

Peace is accomplished not by persuading the law to take less, but by giving it all that it demands. The law's demands are satisfied by the Lord Jesus Christ, the substitute of sinners. He has already accomplished the work. He has paid the penalty, and wrought the righteousness. He is God, and his work is perfect; he is man, and his perfect work is available for those who are bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. Our Mediator is, on the one hand, united as God to all the fulness of the Godhead; and, on the other, as man, united to needy creatures; so that out of his fulness we may receive. God has accepted him for all who believe in him, and to his invitation he makes no limit; him that cometh He will in no wise cast out.

Suppose a condemned sinner to hear, and obey, and live,—to *receive* a righteousness which he could not *work*. Then Christ's righteousness becomes his, and with it God is well pleased. The covenant that bestows another's righteousness free on the unworthy is God's covenant, not man's. When God is pleased with it, why should not we? That righteousness is to a believer the same as if himself had wrought it. If he has it by God's gift, he has as good a title to it as if it had been the result of his own obedience. You do not need now to trust to the lie on this side: My own righteousness is adequate;

nor to the lie on that side : The law will relax, and be satisfied with imperfect obedience. You can come forward now, acknowledging on the one hand that you are unworthy, and on the other that the law is unchangeably holy ; and yet the law and you may meet in peace. It is satisfied by getting a perfect righteousness, and you are safe in having one to give it. The law is magnified, you are justified, and Christ is glorified. Mark now the reconciliation,—the agreement between the two that had fallen out. The law no longer condemns you, and therefore you no longer loathe the law. It smiles on you, and you can afford to smile back again on it. The ground of the controversy has been taken away, and the controversy has fallen. While the law flashed unmitigated anger on you, you answered by impotent flashes of anger against the law. Your conscience is the mirror, and the law is a lamp on high. Whatever colour of light the lamp throws down on the mirror, that same colour does the mirror reflect back to the lamp. As long as a glare of red streamed down from the lamp on the mirror's receptive surface, so long did the mirror, according to its power, throw up a glare of red ; but whensoever the same living lamp began to shed down on the same mirror softened rays of purest white, on the instant the lurid redness fled from that pliant mirror's face, and it gleamed back, in rays of unsullied whiteness, a glad answer to the lamp that saluted it.

My conscience begins to love God's law when God's law ceases to condemn me ; and God's law ceases to condemn me when I am in Christ Jesus : "There is

therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus " (Rom. viii. 1).

2. The Effect of the Agreement is obedience to the law,—that is, the whole word of God. "Do we make void the law through faith? God forbid. Yea, we establish the law" (Rom. iii. 31). Such is the result at which we arrive when we have proceeded thus far with the solution of the question in our text. See the whole of the 119th Psalm; observe the tone of it throughout: "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." You see there a cherished companionship. This is needed in order to actual newness of life; and this is secured only by getting the enmity done away. It is thus with other companions. When there is a quarrel, and a mutual distrust, there is no *walking together*; but when the enmity is removed and friendship restored, you may soon see the friends by each other's side again; so also is it with the law and the conscience; as long as there is condemnation, and the word of God is the accuser, there is no cordiality to it. There may be a show of submission, for fear of yet greater evil; but there is no love to the law, and without love there is no real obedience. But the law that beams forth in all the perfections of God and yet has no charge to make in the judgment against you,—the law that glorifies the Judge and yet permits you to stand justified in his presence,—that law and you are at one. You have no cause of quarrel with it. It ceases to accuse, and you cease to keep it at a distance. You draw to it; you walk with it; you can make it your companion; you can take it

into your bosom and yet not be burned by its terrors ; you make it the man of your counsel. When the two are agreed they are seen walking together. On this principle so important was the sight of Lord Clarendon and Count Orloff walking together on the streets of Paris during the peace conference there at the close of the Crimean war, that the fact was chronicled and proclaimed all over Europe. The two countries, Britain and Russia, whose ambassadors they were, had closed in deadly strife on many a battle-field. It was a fruit, and therefore a sign, that they had agreed, when their representatives were seen walking together.

The word still condemns the sins that linger in you ; but this does not renew the quarrel. You are on the side of the law, and against your own besetting sins. You will love it although it condemns your own sins ; you will love it *because* it condemns your own sins. You will gladly run to the physician, who cuts the gangrened limb away, although that limb be your own right hand. You and the law are agreed ; you take it continually with you as the best defence against your foes ; yourself will drag them forth and place them under the uplifted sword that they may be slain.

I shall now conclude with a brief practical application, in the old-fashioned way, to sinners and saints,—to the converted and the unconverted.

1. Sinners unconverted,—As long as God's law and you are left to fight it out, you are not holy, you are not happy, you are not safe. There is a quarrel ; there is a distance ; you cannot but feel it. It is not safe to

leave that controversy unsettled,—that enemy unappeased. God's law is a dreadful enemy; it will have the last word with its antagonist. "All flesh is as grass; but the word of the Lord endureth for ever" (1 Pet. i. 24, 25). That word will terrify its adversary on a death-bed, and meet him again in the judgment. "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him." That law will allow no relaxation; that creditor receives no composition from a despairing debtor. He claims all: "Pay me that thou owest." You may be in a pitiable state, but the law cannot pity you. But what the law could not do, God our Saviour did. Jesus wept over sinners. That same Jesus unchanged looks down on you. His bowels yearn. He complains, "Ye will not come to me." It is the office of the Holy Spirit to take the enmity away, and apply the blood of sprinkling. God promises the Spirit to them that ask him. "The love of the Spirit" is always ready. Ask and ye shall receive.

2. Believers,—You hope that the controversy is settled,—that the holy law does not condemn you,—that, pleased with Christ's righteousness now on you, it acquits you as just. Well, why is there so little walking in the company of the friend with whom you are agreed?

Improve your advantage. Keep much by the word. Approach it without fear and estrangement. Offer the law your Redeemer's righteousness, and so get near to it in the confidence of love. Get the good of renewed friendship with that once formidable foe. You have many enemies to be subdued, and no companion so helpful as God's law. Have it always at hand; yea, hide it

within your heart, where the thickest of your enemies are. Why so little manifestation of friendship in open habitual companionship? Do I not see you going to some places, and tarrying in some companies, leaving your companion at the door? Inappropriate place, you say, for such a guest,—perhaps it is; but why go into it yourself if it is not fit for your friend? It is a good rule for a Christian to go into no company, and engage in no employment, except where he can take the law of the Lord as his companion all the way and all the time.

But, above all, if you would grow in obedience to the law, realize the privileges of the gospel. The more that you experience reconciliation through Christ, the more will you walk with God. The more that you receive of his grace, the more you will do to please him. Look unto Jesus; the stream of obedience will flow from the spring of faith. Abide in Christ, and you will bear fruits of righteousness. The word of the Master on high is, "Without me ye can do nothing" (John xv. 5). The answer of the servant on earth is, "Through Christ I can do all things" (Phil. iv. 13).

If sinners had been allowed to trample on the law of God, and step into heaven safe over its dishonoured body, the result would have been more sin; again, if the law had overcome sinful men, and poured wrath to the uttermost upon them all, the result would still have been more sin. No obedience would have been produced by either victory. But when righteousness and peace meet in the Mediator, the "fruit is unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."

XXII.

PHYSICAL DESTITUTION STIFLING SPIRITUAL LIFE.

“ And Moses spake so unto the children of Israel ; but they hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage.”—EXOD. vi. 9.

THIS fact has long since passed away ; but its lesson remains ever new. Its body is dead, and has returned to the dust ; but its spirit survives immortal. God gave it a body in the actual history of the Hebrews, that its meaning might become articulate to human ears. A permanent principle of our nature, and a distinctive feature of the divine government are here embodied in an example. Finding the fact in the history, we open it in order to extract the undying truth which it contains. We shall endeavour to explain the historic incident, and to apply the spiritual lesson.

I. The Fact which embodies the principle.

II. The Principle which is embodied in the fact.

I. The Fact which embodies the principle. It consists of three parts :—

1. The message addressed to Israel : “ Moses so spake unto the children of Israel.”

2. Their neglect of the message : “ They hearkened not unto Moses.”

3. The reason of their neglect : “ For anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage.”

1. The message (verses 1-8), in its substance and its circumstances, was fitted to arrest the people’s attention and win their love. In that message, whether you regard its Author, its bearer, or its nature, everything tended to entice ; nothing to repel them. Its author was the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob ; its bearer was Moses, a man who for their sakes had sacrificed his position among the princes of Pharaoh, and taken refuge in a desert ; its nature was hope to the desponding and freedom to the enslaved. The time, too, seemed fit : when the bondage had become unbearable, word is sent that the bondage is almost done. Before the slave a prospect of liberty is opened ; before the weary a prospect of rest. Will the drooping spirits of the multitude revive at this intelligence ? will they shake off the inert submissiveness of a lifetime, and boldly strike for freedom in concert with their deliverer ?

2. No. The promise, although it was exceedingly rich and precious, stirred not the sluggish mass. It was a spark of fire that fell, but it fell on wetted wood, and kindled therefore no flame. “ They hearkened not unto Moses.” Why ? No people could be in deeper affliction ; to no afflicted people could a kinder message come, no kind message could be better authenticated, and yet they heeded not. They neither denied the truth of the message, nor injured the messenger who bore it. When God’s great salvation was provided and offered, the people neglected it. This is the head and front of their

offending. They said nothing against it, but they let it alone.

3. Examine now the specific reason of their apathy. The cause of their indifference to liberty was the extreme severity of their bondage. They hearkened not "for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage."

Here is a paradox: the slavery is excessively severe, and therefore the slave does not care for freedom. One would say the force of the reason goes all the other way. We would rather expect that in proportion to the cruelty of the yoke that galled them would be the alacrity of the captives in rising at a redeemer's call. Had their condition been the reverse of what it was; had the Pharaoh of that generation continued to lavish kindness on Joseph's kindred; had the Hebrews been nursed in luxury and sated with the wealth of Egypt; had they been the possessors of the soil and the favourites of the monarch,—all this might have been given as the reason why they treated with indifference the proffered method of escape. Such prosperity might, and would have made them deaf to the emancipator's call. But because the extreme of prosperity makes a people callous to the voice of freedom, it does not follow that the extreme of adversity will put courage in their hearts and vigour in their limbs. It is a widely-spread and well-known law, that extremes meet. In this case two opposite experiences issue in the same result. Both great prosperity and great distress are weights that often crush in the dust every aspiration for freedom. Plenty extinguishes the desire, and oppression the hope of liberty. He who has

all earthly good does not want a change ; and he who has none does not expect to get one ; therefore both sit still.

We are accustomed to think and say that if Israel had been prosperous in Egypt, they would not have been willing to leave it. This is true ; and yet it does not come into collision with the other truth that their anguish was the reason of their indifference. Broken hearts have lost their spring, and cannot bound from the bottom of the pit at the call of a Deliverer. Great need does not, alone, produce great exertion. The hopeless, helpless captive steadily refuses to stir, lest the chain by the movement should saw deeper into his flesh.

Afterwards these same Hebrews rose and shook off the iron yoke that had lain so long upon their bodies, and sunk so deeply into their souls. The very anguish of spirit, too, which, in the time of their bondage, rendered them listless, in the day of their deliverance, contributed an impulse to their flight. But the mere dead-weight of oppression does not stimulate to exertion : until a door of hope is opened, pressure only presses down. It was when the outstretched arm of their covenant God had rent the prison walls, that the prisoners listened to their leader's call, and followed in his steps. When the way was opened the exodus began. The proverb, "Where there is a will there is a way," contains a truth useful as far as it goes, and in its own department ; but a deeper and more comprehensive truth lies in its converse : Where there is a way there is a will.

II. The Principle embodied in the fact.

These things happened to them in order that their history might be a type for us: it is our business, therefore, to turn the type over, and impress it on our own experience. The operation will produce a legible page of spiritual instruction suited to our own circumstances and our own times.

The story of this ancient incident may seem at first sight to have no more affinity with modern character and conduct, than the mummies which travellers dig from the tombs in Egypt have with the living men and women of the present day; yet it is precisely such a body that can look into our faces, and dart convincing truth into our consciences, whenever the Spirit of the Lord has breathed into it a living soul. The letter, in itself dead, may, through the ministry of the Spirit, become living and impart life. So be it, Lord, by thy grace, and to thy glory.

In the printed lesson, as in the impressed type, there are three distinct constituent parts: the message, the neglect of the message, and the reason of the neglect. The third of these points is the distinguishing peculiarity of the text, and for it, accordingly, the greater part of our time and attention must be reserved.

1. The message. To us, as to them, it is a message of mercy. Specifically, it proclaims deliverance to the captive. The whole history of Israel, including the exode, is framed for the purpose of showing a sinner's need, and the redemption which the Saviour brings. Do not imagine that the bondage and emancipation of the Hebrews constitute the original, and that man's fall and

Christ's salvation were cast after it on the same mould. The history of redemption is precisely the reverse. The method of mercy lay from the first in the infinite Mind. Throughout the preparatory ages, before the fulness of time, the delights of the Deliverer were with the captives in their prison. At sundry times and in divers manners he projected into time shadows and figures of his pre-determined covenanted work. Sometimes by instituted ordinances, and sometimes in providential events, he revealed the leading features of his plan, before he came in person to execute it. He longed for the set time, and was straitened till it came. He hovered on the edge of the unseen eternity, and threw over into our world some suggestive types of his great design. The incident recorded in our text is one of these.

God recognises all mankind as slaves, and sends an offer of freedom. Christ is the messenger of the covenant. A greater than Moses is here, publishing a greater salvation. Through the lamb slain is the deliverance wrought. The death of Christ is the death of death. The sea of wrath is divided, and the redeemed of the Lord pass through. As with ancient Israel, so with all Abraham's spiritual seed, they are delivered from one master in order that they may obey another. "Let my people go, that they may serve me." He who redeems them from the oppressor betrothes them to himself. He allures them into the wilderness, and abides with them there. The glory of the Lord goes before them during the journey, and settles on the mercy-seat when they reach the promised land.

2. Such is the proposal ; but it is not heeded. Comparatively few disbelieve the message or revile the messenger. With these, be they few or many, we have at present no direct concern. The circumstances of our times, and the character of our people, concur with the text in directing our attention, not to the opposers, but to the neglecters of the great salvation.

3. The reason of this neglect. In the case of the Hebrews it was anguish of spirit and cruel bondage. Let us beware of mistake here. Both with them and with us the true cause of the listlessness is the carnal mind, which is enmity against God. But while the evil heart is in every case the seat of rebellion, other and outward things become, from time to time, the instruments and occasions of specific disloyalties. For example, some are so prosperous, and so fully satisfied with their prosperity in this life, that they have neither time nor inclination to attend to the life eternal : others are so oppressed with grief, and care, and toil, that they never get their heads lifted up from the dust to take one look of heaven. At one time prosperity, and at another time adversity, becomes the immediate occasion to an evil heart of departing from the living God.

At present we are called to investigate only one class of these occasions or causes of neglect. Anguish of spirit and cruel bondage still make many captives hug their chains, and refuse to hear the voice which invites them to glorious liberty. Many of these burdens are themselves sins, and many more are the fruits of sins ; but they are not on that account less heavy or less effectual as sopori-

fics of the soul. We speak of them at present mainly in their character of oppressive weights, and only incidentally in their character of sins.

The lesson here parts into two branches, one pointing to our neighbour's neglect, and another to our own.

(1.) The first lesson teaches the duty of Christ's disciples to a careless neighbourhood. Abject poverty in these favoured lands exacts a heavier task than Pharaoh from a more numerous host than the Hebrews in Egypt. It is true that their own vice is the direct cause of the greatest and sorest portion of the people's poverty; and it is also true that almost all the difficulty of drying up the broad stream of pauperism is due to its connection with the well-spring of vice. These facts are both real and important; but though in themselves, and for other purposes great, they do not bear very much or very directly on our present inquiry. For the present we include, of design, in one view, the poverty both of the vicious and of their victims. Heavy burdens, whatever may have brought them on, keep human souls, as well as human bodies, cleaving to the dust.

Low, dark, damp, close, crowded dwellings,—rags and filth adhering to the person,—the want of a bed for rest by night, and a seat for rest by day,—food unwholesome in character, and deficient in quantity,—these and a host of kindred evils considered not as sins, but as sorrows, depress and oppress the spirits of the poor, so that the voice of divine mercy finds no tender spot to touch them on. Oppression makes even a wise man mad: what then is its effect on those who are not wise? It makes

them madder. Their souls are soured to the bottom, and they care neither for God nor man. A very large portion of the population, especially in the great cities, is in this condition. They are desperate and reckless. They do not dread a worse fate than that which has already befallen them, and do not expect a better. They are destitute alike of fear and of hope. The spirit, steeped long in anguish, and crushed down by a cruel bondage, sullenly, silently, conclusively dares God and man to do their worst. Of what lies above and beyond this world they know little, and care less. One half of the Epicurean's short creed serves them : Let us hunger and starve to-day, and die to-morrow.

Observe, I am not palliating sin ; I am only owning a fact. Nor do I exaggerate its character. I would not be able to do so, although I were willing. The truth here is stranger and stronger than any fiction can be.

What shall be done? They who walk by sight through this valley of dry bones cannot hope ; and they who do not hope cannot make an adequate effort. Truly, the sights that may be seen on the right hand and on the left of our daily walk should send us both to prayers and to pains. We need a hopeful heart and a working hand. Mark how the promise runs : "The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Don't despair because of the greatness of the work, for God will do it ; but don't sit idle, for it is under your feet that the adversary will be crushed at length.

I am constrained to utter here what I count the present truth in this department : that while the disciples

of Christ should not give less attention to spiritual teaching, they should give more to the material wellbeing of fallen brothers. We must, like our Master, take hold of them by the body in order that we may reach their souls. Self-sacrificing, laborious effort to improve the temporal condition of the poor is a species of revival much needed in the Church of Christ. Of course I do not counsel donations of money or food to the vicious, instead of reproof and instruction: I claim the union of the two. As I own on one hand, that a body of material benevolence, wanting the living soul of spiritual instruction, is only a carcase that will speedily corrupt,—I insist on the other, that we should not expect to scatter the strong sins and sorrows of humanity by the ghost of good advice, not embodied in substantial help to the flesh and blood of our brethren. “The poor ye have always with you.” He who has left them with us looks down to see whether, in our method of treating them, we shall follow his example, or seek our own ease. Every person should mourn apart for past neglect in this department, and forthwith begin to do, with all his might, whatever his hand finds to do. But isolated effort cannot go far: the emergency demands combined plans and corporate powers. God is trying, not only our individual faith, but also our national Christianity. By his sovereign gift, and through the faithfulness of our forefathers, we have inherited unequalled social, civil, and religious privileges; and the nation is now on its trial whether it will own or repudiate the duties which these privileges imply.

If the Spirit were poured out like a flood, the dark,

dishonouring spots would speedily be washed away. As in the broad, deep, pure lake, which sleeps aloft among the hills, there is enough of water, when the channels are formed and the sluices opened, to cleanse away the accumulated filth of the city ; so, if our churches, and other Christian organizations, were let into the upper spring of divine grace, these channels themselves would be flushed and purified, and the overflow would bear away the indurated corruption of many generations. If a whole congregation of quickened, thankful, hopeful, eager Christians were lifted bodily by the love of Him who bought them, and precipitated in mass upon a neighbourhood where the people live not only without God, but almost without clothes in the world,—where men and women of the same flesh and blood with ourselves, pine without a home on earth or a hope in heaven, we might with God's blessing save our brethren. Little driblets are, or seem to be, lost in the ground ; a great gush would tell upon the vices and privations of a downfallen and downtrodden district.

People should not be laid beneath the ground till they are dead. Room ought to be made on the surface of God's earth, and in sight of his sun, for all his living children. A man's right to do what he likes with his own should, in obedience to the divine law, and for behoof of the poor, be limited by the national will in the form of an imperial law. There is clamant need for more paternal laws, and more vigorous administration, in regard to the dwellings of the poor, both in town and country.

The feeblest section of society, children in silliness though old in years, should not be abandoned as material of trade to an inordinate swarm of publicans. Does any one imagine that a nation can thrive under the government of the Supreme, if it is unable or unwilling to protect those helpless beings? We cannot escape: the wheels of Providence are turning slowly, but steadily round; and they are so constructed that, while they grasp the smallest, they in due time crush the greatest oppressions. Even among the wreck and debris of humanity that is cast up in heaps on the shores of our greater seas of population, laws are understood and kept which savour more of humanity than ours. In their otherwise savage conflicts, they will not suffer the stronger to strike the weaker wretch after he is down. We permit the dram-seller to prey upon his victim after he has lost all power of resistance. After strong drink has softened his brain and slackened all his sinews, drained the manhood out and injected a sevenfold measure of Satanic passion in its stead, the seller may still make money out of these remnants of humanity as long as they will yield a drop to the screw; and when the soul of the worn-out transgressor goes to God's judgment-seat, the dishonoured dust is buried at our expense. While all this is going on, we stand and look as if we could not help it; we could help it, if we would. We ought to defend the poor, although his own sin has brought on his poverty; God will require this at our hands.

I know well that we ought to preach the gospel to the poor, and that the poor ought to obey it; I know

further that when God is pleased to pour out his Spirit with the ministry of the word, all these obstacles disappear in a day, like broken ice in the spring-flood of a mighty river. A general revival would make short work with these mountains, and cast them all into the midst of the sea. Counting on their Redeemer's power and love, Christians should ask and expect such a revival; but by withholding our hand we are provoking God to withhold his Spirit. I do not think we would succeed if we should abandon our scriptural, spiritual appliances, and launch into social and material efforts in their stead. That would be infidelity, and the dead body of our benevolence would work no deliverance; but, maintaining and enlarging all our spiritual hopes and means, we should plant material efforts on a parallel line, tenfold more efficient than we have attempted heretofore. In view of the economic and corporeal bondage, which is, in point of fact, making multitudes deaf to the offer of divine mercy, I do not counsel my brethren to try works instead of faith; but I proclaim my fear that our *faith without works is dead, being alone*.

(2.) The second lesson applies more directly to ourselves. Anguish of spirit, whether it comes from God's hand in the form of personal affliction, or from man's hand in the form of unjust oppression, may become the occasion of neglecting the salvation of Christ. You have been led, some by the representations of others, and some by personal experience, to look upon a time of trouble as a time of spiritual revival. Thanks be to our gracious God, it very often is. But beware; the day of anguish

from any cause is not a sinner's best day for seeking a Saviour. Sorrow is not seed. By breaking up the ground, it may conspire with other means to make the seed grow better, but itself bears no fruit; but in some cases its actual effect is to crush and not to stimulate. Beware of neglecting your spiritual state and interests while you are well, in the expectation that distress when it comes will make you religious. There is no truth in nature more certain than this, that the time of health and happiness is the best time for cleaving to Christ and making our calling and election sure. Then it could be best done, *if men would then do it.*

Beware lest you be letting the best time slip past, and the worst time draw on, while you are not saved! But, besides the many testimonies of Scripture to the spiritual profitableness of affliction, you have seen examples of men who neglected the Saviour in the time of health, seeking him successfully when trouble came. True; you have seen on earth such instances, and if you get into heaven you will see many more; but all this does not prove your case. Here is a man who once possessed a fortune, and while he possessed it, could neither keep a roof over his head, nor procure a comfortable meal. Now, after having wasted both his money and his health, he lives and lodges better on a few weekly shillings, won by the sweat of his wrinkled brow. Does the man's present comfort entice you to imitate his former wastefulness? No; his experience does not prove that a scanty pittance with hard toil and a feeble frame is better fitted to secure material comforts than a full income with

health and strength; it proves only that a shred of remnant means, when wisely laid out, yields more substantial comfort than thousands wasted on vice. But these thousands, if they had been rightly applied, would have done more to sustain, and preserve, and invigorate life than the wages of a worn-out labourer. One pound economically and skilfully employed does more to make home happy than ten pounds thrown away; but it does not follow that for the comfort of a family one pound does more than ten. Ten pounds will do precisely ten times as much, if they are not wasted, but properly applied.

In the outlay of the soul's talents the same law holds good. It is true that some who were worldly or profane in the time of prosperity have become true Christians in a time of trouble; but no thanks to them for that. It is no credit to us that we need such discipline; and no profit that we wait for it. It is true that God in sovereign mercy often uses affliction to bring us to Christ; but he does so because we would not come to Christ at an earlier and better time. The mind may be heavenly without "sore bondage," and earthly with it. If you beckon the Spirit off till affliction come, affliction may come without the Spirit. There is no "anguish of spirit" in "the just made perfect," and yet they are like flames of fire in the keenness of their love to the Lord that bought them. They are happiest who give their bright days to Christ; for when the dark days come, the Light of Life continues to shine within their hearts.

XXIII.

MAN AND HIS GLORY LIKE THE GRASS
AND ITS FLOWER.

“Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away : but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.”—
1 PET. i. 23-25.

THESE verses institute a comparison, and bring out a contrast, between the natural and the spiritual life. Every son of man is *born* into one life ; and every son of God is *born again* into another. There is a mystery in every man ; but a greater mystery in every Christian. Nature is deep ; but grace is deeper.

It is not a contrast between the carnal and the spiritual mind. Of these it cannot be said that the one is short-lived and the other enduring. Spirit does not die, whether saved or unsaved. The two lives brought together in the text are the natural life of men in the body which soon fades away, and the new life of the regenerated which will for ever flourish. These two lives are not in all their aspects opposite, for the same person may at the same time possess both. When a man is born of the Spirit, he is not then and thereby stripped of the life which belongs to the flesh : every child of God, from the day of his conversion till the day of his death, possesses and enjoys both. He holds them, however, by

different tenures: the first or natural life will soon depart; but the new or spiritual life will be his for ever.

That which is in the text expressly and repeatedly said to be everlasting, is not the Scriptures as an external revelation of truth, but the "word of God" as the seed of a new life in believers. There is a sense in which it may be truly said that the written word, viewed objectively, will last for ever; but the apostle speaks here of the word as it lies in the broken heart, and lives in the new creature.

In the 23d verse we learn that the new life of Christians springing from incorruptible seed is like the seed from which it springs; in the 24th verse, quoted from Isaiah (chap. xl.), we learn that the natural life of the body which we all possess in common is like the green herbage, and all its glory like the flower which that herbage bears. The two are compared in respect to *endurance*, and the result is, that while the one lasts only a season, the other will never die.

- I. Explain the analogy.
- II. Illustrate its truth by examples.
- III. Apply the lessons which it contains.

I. Explain the analogy. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass;" the figure fits so exactly that we may venture to make a close inspection, and institute a minute analysis. The comparison of human life generally to the green herbage contains two distinct yet corresponding parts, expressed

in the usual manner of Hebrew poetry. First, we have the simple, broad, and comprehensive intimation, "All flesh is grass;" and then a more special analogy rising out of it, as the flower springs from the stalk, "The glory of man is like the flower of the grass." Man is like the grass, and his glory like its flower; life is short, and the period of its perfect development between the first and the second childhood is shorter still.

The analogy, in its first and more general form, requires scarcely any exposition: no comparison could be more true or more obvious. Mankind are like the herbage of summer, which will wither at the turn of the year, although no accident befall it, and is liable to be crushed before its time under the wild beast's foot, or cut through by the mower's scythe. A human life passes through the same stages as the herbage of a season; it has a growing spring, a ripening summer, and a fading autumn. The history of a man consists of a gradual growing to maturity, and a gradual declining to the grave. Such is his best estate, when no accident cuts him off in mid-time of his days. This is the mirror which truly reflects the image of "all flesh." So pass the threescore and ten years which sum up this mortal pilgrimage. It is like a dream when one awaketh: it seems very small when it is nearly done.

But if this is true of the flesh—the sentient nature which man has in common with the brutes,—what shall be said of all that constitutes his distinguishing peculiarity as a moral and intelligent being? Although the mere flesh is evanescent, what of the glory with which his

Maker has crowned his head? Our text has two things to say of this glory—the first, that it greatly excels in worth and beauty the animal nature on which it grows; the second, that it is still more short-lived. If all flesh be as the *grass*, all its glory is as the *flower* of the grass. And what are the distinguishing characteristics of the flower? These two: greater brilliance, and a shorter day. The herbage grows long and far ere the flower appears; and the flower, though more beautiful than its supporting stalk, fades and falls before it. The flower is indeed the glory of the grass, but it comes up later, and withers earlier. What shall we say, then, of all that is peculiar to man?—of that human face divine, and that articulate speech, and that calculating mind, which mark him out as the chief of God's creatures here, and ruler of his world? Can the glory of man's soul, as well as his sentient nature, be compared to grass? No; for though it is more brilliant while it lasts, it is sooner over. The distinguishing excellence of human nature is not like the grass, it is only like the flower of the grass.

None of these defects adhere to the new creature. The life which is hid with Christ in God is not like grass; it will never decay. The features of the Redeemer's likeness, which, through the ministry of the Spirit, gradually grow upon it and constitute its glory, are not like earthly flowers. Those who have been created again in Christ Jesus shall stand around the throne in white clothing, with palms in their hands. They are and shall be for ever, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Let us now,

II. Illustrate the truth of the analogy by examples. We shall examine in detail some specimens of those flowers which constitute the glory of humanity, with the view of pointing out that, though they fade soon from the natural life of the mere son of man, they flourish for ever on the resurrection life of those who in the regeneration have become the children of God.

1. *Beauty* of form ought, without any scruple, to be ranked as one of the glories of humankind; we should neither despise nor adore it. It is quite true that it often becomes a snare,—becomes the handle by which the tempter holds his victim,—but that is no detraction from its excellence. It only shows—what we all knew before—that bad people abuse good things. The erect attitude, the upward look on heaven, the symmetry of structure and nicely-balanced proportions, the expressive features, and the various peculiarities of shade, and form, and motion, and magnitude, which go to constitute human beauty, should not be lightly esteemed. In our species beauty of person is the rule and tendency of nature, although particular features in individuals may by various accidents be more or less obscured. It has pleased God our Father so to arrange the features of our frame, and so to constitute our minds, that we count them beautiful. We admire the flower of the grass, and devoutly see in it the wisdom of its Maker; shall we not look with deeper interest on a lighted human countenance, and see in that glory of man a glory to the Lord? Loathe as much as you will the moral depravity which converts all a Father's gifts into instruments of evil; but reverently

acknowledge the mark of his fingers in the model of man.

This glory does not last long. It is a flower, lovely, fragrant, attractive; but it withers soon. Man's life is short; but the glory which grows upon it is shorter. The flower is later blown and earlier faded than the frail green stem which bears it.

But the beauty of the new creature in Christ does not fade like a flower. It is an interesting speculation—although it can be nothing more—to imagine the beauty of unfallen man. The peculiar sweetness sometimes imparted to the countenance of an ordinary person by the sudden influx of a “great peace” in periods of spiritual revival, suggests the probability that we lost by sin an external loveliness so great that we lack now the power even of conceiving what it was. But great though the loss be, Christians sorrow not over it as those who have no hope; for their gain is greater. Whatever was lost by sin is restored by redemption. Well might the angel say, “Why weepest thou?” to the disciple who was sorrowing beside the empty grave of Jesus. The Head has risen; the members shall rise. The risen Christ is glorious, and risen Christians will be like him. Humanity redeemed will be humanity perfect. As the idea of man in the mind of God from eternity, will be the man who shall stand in his presence accepted at the great day.

I would fain realize the beauty of the resurrection body, as well as the spiritual purity of the saints in light. Oh, how beautiful man will be when there is no longer

any seed of corruption in his body, or any enmity to God in his soul! I think a true Christian sometimes halts painfully in his pilgrimage for want of this ingredient in his hope. The redemption of the soul is, indeed, the most precious thing; thereon depend all other blessings; but among the blessed things that lean on it, the perfection of the redeemed body is a consoling hope—a consolation which Christians greatly need in this vale of tears. “How bright these glorious *spirits* shine!” Yea; but when Christ’s work is completed, they will be embodied spirits. “How bright these glorious *bodies* shine,” when they are washed from sin in the Saviour’s blood, and raised from the grave by his power! These flowers will never fade.

2. Articulate *speech* is another glory of man. It places him far above the flesh—the sentient nature which he shares with the inferior creatures. It is like a flower in respect to its surpassing beauty; and like a flower, too, in respect to its short duration. It lasts longer than some flowers, but not so long as the herb on which it grows. It does not open its blossom until the human creature has spent an infantine spring, dumb like the brutes; and it begins to fade before the natural life has altogether decayed. Infancy does not possess it at all; and old age retains only its shattered remnants.

As it springs in the new life this is a perennial flower. How sweet will speech be when all languages shall have been merged in one, and all tongues be employed in publishing the Redeemer’s praise! This glory of the flesh will drop in the dust soon, like flowers under the first

frosts of autumn,—these tongues will soon be silent ; but if we are new creatures in Christ, they will yet speak again. Striving to realize the highest conceivable degree of excellence in speech, Paul (1 Cor. xiii.) suggests the idea of one speaking “with the tongues of men and of angels.” That which the greatest saint in the body here could only with difficulty imagine, the meanest saint in glory will actually enjoy. In addition to the tongue of angels, of which the spirits made perfect will partake, the redeemed of the Lord in their resurrection state will regain the tongue of men, and, with both experiences combined, will sustain the highest part in the concert of a new creation.

“Every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself even as he is pure” (1 John iii. 3). Hope in Christ leads to holiness ; and, in particular, the hope of employing these tongues in speaking the Redeemer’s praise among perfected saints and angels, would be mighty to purge them from all impurity now. Shall I defile with lies or lewdness that wonderfully-fashioned instrument on which the name of Christ will resound for ever in a holy heaven ? Your tongues, Christians, are bought with a price ; they are not your own ; surrender them to the service of their owner. “Speaking the truth in love” is the phase which the flower should maintain under these wintry skies now ; what the beauty of its blossom shall be, eye hath not seen nor ear heard.

3. The various powers of mind which go to make up the peculiar glory of man are so many flowers, both for beauty and for brevity. Out of many take, for example, one :—

Memory. A gorgeous blossom to grow in such a lowly place, and be sustained by such a fragile stalk ! So many and so great are its uses in the various operations of human minds and human hands, that, wanting it, man would not be man. It goes into everything, and goes, not as an accessory, but an essential. It is the thread on which all the pearls of knowledge are strung : if it were drawn out, the various processes of the understanding would fall and lie like glittering beads scattered on the ground. Wanting memory, all mental activity would be like a heap of leaden letters in a printer's fount, with no skilful hand to set them in an intelligible page.

Like a flower as to beauty while it blooms, it is like a flower, too, in its tendency to fade. It does not appear so early as the herb, and does not remain so long. By slow degrees and much labour the memory is exercised into strength. In its maturity it has a glory that excelleth : it is one of the fearful and wonderful things in our frame. In the processes of business, of music, of science, its glory glances forth like sunbeams ; but if man lives out his allotted span, this flower which grows so sweetly on his flesh will fade before him. It is a melancholy sight to see it drooping while its stalk still stands sapful and vigorous. The sagacious merchant who was wont to sit in silence at his desk, holding in his hands the multifarious threads of a business which spread like network across four continents, remains at home now ; or enters the office at the accustomed hour, to turn mechanically the leaves of the ledger, which to him has lost its meaning. Younger men grasped the reins as

they fell from his feeble fingers, and the "head of the firm" is gently set aside. In like manner the man of science loses himself in labyrinths through which he once could easily thread his way. The senator leaves the stage of public life, or rather is jostled out by stronger, because younger competitors. In all these spheres the process of decay is similar; the old man has not now so good a memory as once he had; or some other essential faculty has given way. The herbage is still green, but the flower has withered; the living man is there, but his glory has departed.

So fades the flower from the natural life; but on the new life of the regenerate it blooms for ever. Those who are branches in the true vine, draw from his root an unfading freshness.

"Those that within the house of God,
Are planted by his grace,
They shall grow up, and flourish all
In our God's holy place."

Memory in the resurrection life will never grow dim: it will be a mirror always bright, in which the ever-lengthening past may be clearly seen. The redeemed of the Lord, when they have arrived at home, "forget not all his benefits." The fall by sin, and the pardon through Christ,—the death in which they lay, and the life into which the Holy Spirit led them,—the pardoned will never forget. These will constitute the materials of the new song, and the song will be always new. By its nature and its circumstances the new life must be making constant progress; it cannot stand still. As ages pass

there will be more mercies to be remembered, and the memory will contain more. The memory of the just made perfect will "grow by what it feeds on." "All the fulness of God" lies open as the treasure out of which it may draw its supply, and it will therefore be ever filling, never full.

No petal shall ever drop from that flower after it has been transplanted into the garden of God; not one of all the multitude of mercies which he has enjoyed will ever slip from the memory of a saint in rest. The glory of the new man is not like the flowers of the earth, which sparkle upwards on the sky for a season and then die; but, like those flowers of light which lie spread so thickly on the field of heaven, and shed thence their mild lustre on the earth, it will "shine as the stars for ever and ever."

III. Apply the lessons which the text contains. The analogy is exquisite, and the parallel lines of Hebrew poetry in which it is expressed are admirably fitted to bring out its beauty. We can all in some measure appreciate the truth of the sentiment, and the appropriateness of the language in which it is clothed; but if we go no further, the word will be to us "the letter which killeth," and not "the Spirit which giveth life." Beautiful imagery cannot take away sin, either in its condemning guilt or its ruling power. To gratify the taste does not make the heart new. The lesson so sweetly spoken here concerns ourselves; it is fitted to search and solemnize us. Laying the axe to the root of nature's best supports, it should

make us flee "for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

The practical lesson of the text is directly applicable both to those who have attained the spiritual, and those who possess as yet only the natural life. To those it says, Of the two lives which stir within you, one will wither soon, and the other will bloom for ever,—do not neglect the greater for the less ; to these it says, The only life which you have will fade like the grass,—seek, ere it be too late, the life eternal.

1. Christian, two distinct lives throb within you; the one, by its hurried, bustling motion, is "beating the dead march to the grave;" the other, though feeble as a newborn babe, being "hid with Christ in God," is now and shall for ever be beyond the reach of death. Here the question naturally arises, Do you distribute your regard between these two according to their worth? What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed? is a great cry in the world,—a great cry in the church. It is not wrong to raise it; it is the duty of a Christian to care for the natural life which God has given him; to neglect it would be to throw his gifts away. The Bible does not bid us neglect the natural life, but it suggests some pungent questions regarding its comparative worth: "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

The spiritual life is an exotic in this world, and needs more care than the other which is indigenous in the soil.

“Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. ii. 12). Fear and trembling are the words; fear lest the new life wither for want of depth, or be scorched by temptation, or choked by the world’s cares. Christians should not lay out their strength in the cultivation of this green herb and its transient flower; in decking this frail body, and polishing this human speech, and exercising their mental faculties on things that perish in the using. Give all these their own subordinate place, and let the deepest, strongest, straining of your soul go to cherish unto strength that other life which is “Christ in you the hope of glory” (Col. i. 27).

2. It is a great mistake to leave a precious soul to the chances of this short, uncertain life. Such blunders are not common in the business of the world. The valuable cargo must indeed be, in one sense, intrusted to the frail ship in a stormy season near a rocky shore; but ere the ship has left the river, the goods are insured to the full extent of their value. In complicated transactions you may sometimes meet with loss in spite of all your care; but you do not in mere recklessness rush into foreseen disaster. In a certain transaction you require security, and two are laid before you for your choice; one is the name of a shifty, slippery, venturesome, penniless man, and the other a first bond on a broad estate; you never hesitate, and never err. Where the distinction between the uncertain and the sure is so obvious and so important, the instinct of self-interest fastens at once upon the good and rejects the evil. Oh, for a similar sense and vigour in the management of our highest interests! This life is like

the grass; it will wither at the end of the season; all the glory of this life is like the flower of the grass; although its bloom is brighter it will sooner die. Your life may survive a few years as a flowerless stalk; but it is neither much courted by others nor much enjoyed by yourself, after its ornaments have one by one dropped off.

When this active limb grows feeble, have I no other support? When the beauty of the flesh grows ghastly, have I nothing fair to look upon? When this tabernacle is decaying, have I no mansion prepared in the Father's house? It is a fearful thing to be driven out of this life before you have obtained another. The saddest case is perhaps the commonest; to be so oppressed by disease, or so callous by habit, that you permit death to close upon you and jostle you out of the only life you have, without either a beam of hope or a cry of anguish.

It is not after the storm has arisen, or the telegraph has reported that his ship has struck, that the merchant runs to insure his goods. He effects the insurance while the sun is shining and the air calm; he effects the insurance before the ship has cleared from the dock, or at all events before she has left the river. Go and do likewise, living, but dying men! Now is the accepted time; to-day, according to the true testimony of his adversaries, "This man receiveth sinners." God with us is waiting; still his terms are, "Whosoever will." To-day you may enter into life; to-morrow the door may be shut.

XXIV.

LIVING FAITH A WORKING FAITH.

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.”—JAMES ii. 26.

WITH a view to the exposition and application of this text, we shall endeavour to exhibit,—

- I. The errors which it opposes.
- II. The doctrines which it teaches.
- III. The practical lessons which it suggests.

I. The errors which it opposes. The covenant of mercy, although framed before the fall, was revealed after it. The Bible is not so old as sin. Error came first, and truth followed it. A daring rebel rose in a portion of the sovereign's dominions, and a force was sent to discover and destroy him; the position, magnitude, and character of the insurrection, determine the dispositions of the royal army which has been commissioned to put it down. Thus, error that sprung up on earth has determined the form of the truth that invades it from heaven.

The mould and the thing moulded on it, are in one sense similar to each other, and in another opposite. The mould communicates its own form to the liquid metal which is poured in, and yet the moulded figure, when

complete, is precisely the reverse of that which formed it. Every hollow in the receiving matrix leaves a protuberance on the vessel which is cast. It is thus that revealed truth takes its shape from pre-existing error, although the truth so framed is, feature by feature, the opposite of the error from which it received its form. Into every hollow of the pre-existing falsehood ran the searching outpoured truth; and, corresponding to every deep lie of Satan, stands ultimately out an opposing solid truth from God. The deeper and wider the yawning pit of lies, the stronger and higher towers the truth antagonist.

It is thus both in the main Principle and in the subordinate Details.

In its leading principle the salvation revealed followed the form of the loss previously sustained. The pliant remedy went round the disease, and came out its like, and yet its opposite. The serpent bruised the woman's seed; the woman's seed therefore bruised the serpent. The tempter closed with the first Adam, and the embrace was death to man; the second Adam closed with the tempter, and the embrace was death to man's great foe. As by man came death, so also by man came the resurrection from the dead. Condemnation was first, and stood alone triumphant: salvation came afterwards, and fastened on the foe, and closed all round, and overcame. Emerging from the strife victorious, salvation appeared in the form which it got in those fires. The truth which the Bible contains was, in its essence, prior to all error and sin, for error is originally a deviation from eternal

truth ; but the Bible which brings the truth to us, has been shaped upon falsehood its foe.

The same rule holds good when you descend to the specific features of revelation. Even the sayings of Jesus often took their shape from the cavils of devils or wicked men. It is an instructive exercise to read the evangelical history from this point of view. Large portions of the record consist of conversations : the sayings of proud Pharisees, or scoffing Sadducees, or weak disciples, or tyrant rulers, alternate with the sayings of Jesus, as hill and valley alternate in a landscape. When self-righteousness, or malice, or blasphemy, spurt up from an evil heart of unbelief, he gently covers it with saving truth. Thus the wild fires in the heart of the earth threw up the hills and mountain ranges ; then the rain and sun came down from heaven, and clothed their jagged sides with verdure. All unfit were these internal fires to make a green and growing world ; and yet their wild upheavings were permitted, and employed to give that variety to the earth's surface, on which both its beauty and fertility so largely depend. Those outbursts of sin which the evangelic histories record, could not by themselves have done any good to men ; but they became the occasion of drawing from Jesus a corresponding opposing covering truth, which lies upon them yet, yielding in abundance the bread of life to our own generation.

The operation and effect of this principle may be seen in the teaching of the two apostles, James and Paul, regarding faith. Had the errors of those days been of another cast, the truth on that subject would have

descended to us in a different form. Each strong projecting truth about faith, that stands out in the apostolic epistles, received its shape by going into the dark recesses of error,—the depths of Satan as they then existed in the world: the true doctrine, when cooled and solidified for preservation through all time, was found to have taken its form from the manifold deceits that prevailed among men, when that doctrine flowed warm and new from the Spirit of God through the apostles' lips.

More particularly the two main features of faith, as represented in the Scriptures—the two feet on which it stands secure—have been moulded in two deep pits which Satan had prepared for the destruction of men. The two errors regarding faith were contrary to each other, and yet both alike were contrary to truth. The one despised living faith as unnecessary; the other exalted dead faith as sufficient. This heretic laboured on what he called obedience, and held that thereby he might be justified; that heretic professed faith, and thought he might thereby be relieved from the pain and trouble of a strict obedience. The Legalist and the Antinomian stand on opposite extremes, equally distant from the truth that saves. Both put asunder the two whom God has joined, and the severance is death to the severed: as well might you expect the right and left sides of a human being to live and act after they are separated by a sword. The works of the Legalist are dead for want of faith; the faith of the Antinomian dead for want of works. These two deep pits, so situated, give form and position to the two main pillars of the truth.

The errors being opposite are mutually intolerant of each other: the two pits are dug on opposite sides of the right path, and the same traveller cannot fall into both at the same time. The adversary goeth about seeking whom he may devour, and how he may devour them. Persons of one character and tendency lean to the right; persons of another character and tendency lean to the left: for either a snare is set.

As the errors are opposite, the same enunciation of truth is not fitted to subvert both. The truths that will meet and match these lies are in an important sense the opposite of each other. The errors, though opposite, are both errors, and the truths, though in a subordinate sense opposite, are both truths.

Two separate witnesses have been chosen and called to give evidence against these two errors, and enunciate the corresponding counteracting truths. Paul deals with one of the adversaries, and James with the other. The two boldest leaders are sent against the two main divisions of the foe: Paul meets the Legalist who trusts in his own righteousness and tells him, By faith a man is justified, and not by the works of the law: James meets the Antinomian who thinks obedience unnecessary, and tells him, By works a man is justified and not by faith only. Thus saving truth is flanked on either side by two strong towers, as sentinels on the two chief approaches to her citadel; and the divine wisdom and goodness are manifest in this, that while the defensive truths are posted there to repel assailing errors, those errors

were the means of drawing out the truth in those lines, and casting it into those forms of strength.

Paul insisting on faith only, and James on works also, stand not face to face fighting against each other, but back to back fighting opposite foes : they are both on the same side, although for the time they look and strike in opposite directions. Paul's argument is not truth at rest, exhibiting her countenance in full ; but truth in conflict with the heresy of legalism. In like manner, the argument of James in our text gives not a portrait in full ; but a glimpse of truth in the act of doing battle with the Antinomian heresy. In that combat you see one side, and in this another, of the same truth. A Confession is like a picture in which the face of faith appears full, but still ; with all its features in view, but none of them in motion : the Bible, on the contrary, is the real battle-field where living warriors fight. Various and ever-shifting are the attitudes of the combatants : in the mazes and evolutions of the fight some of them seem at times to be arrayed against their comrades ; but they are only pursuing to extremities certain divisions of the foe, and fully executing each his own portion of the great Captain's plan. Neither the argument of Paul concerning faith, nor the argument of James concerning works, could be inserted in a Confession. The Confession, being only a picture, must hang stiff and motionless on the wall ; but in the Bible the soldiers, fighting against heterogeneous, ever-shifting hosts, and under the eye of their living Head, exhibit a freedom of movement which is not possible in any representation. When the strife is over and the

victory won, Paul and James will stand side by side before the Captain of their salvation, and receive in common the same award: Well done, good and faithful soldiers, enter ye into the joy of your Lord.

The errors with which these two apostles were respectively called to deal were very diverse, and consequently the same treatment was not suitable for both. The contest in Paul's argument lay between faith and something else as its rival in the justification of the sinful; the contest in the argument of James lay between two different kinds of faith. The first battle is fought by Paul: he contends against all comers, that a sinner can be justified only through faith in the righteousness of Christ. Then appears James, and carries the question a stage further, insisting that only one particular species of faith can justify, to the exclusion of spurious kinds which usurp the same name.

Paul divides the whole world into two: those who seek to be justified before God through faith in Christ; and those who trust in other appliances. He then tells off as on the right side those who cling to faith, and sets aside all the rest as errorists. Observe, now, it is the division whom Paul has pronounced right, and that division only, with whom James deals. He addresses not those who denied Paul's doctrine of faith, but those who accepted and professed it. Paul's test decided the soundness of the profession: James throws in among the sound another solvent which precipitates a quantity of dark and fetid grounds. His question is: Assuming that you all acknowledge faith, is your faith living or dead? The orthodox, like Gideon's army, after having been greatly

diminished in numbers by one test, must be still further reduced by another. Of those who confessed the doctrine that a man is justified by faith alone, some were regenerated, and some still remained carnal. The creatures acted not after their name, but after their kind. Some who professed the true faith served the Lord that bought them in newness of life; others who professed the true faith, thinking that their profession would shield them from punishment, gave themselves over to the pleasures of sin. For the conviction of these self-deceivers, the apostle James proves by his deciding word, that faith without obedience is dead, and that dead faith does not save.

II. The doctrines which it teaches.

Here we must, in the first place, endeavour to ascertain the meaning of the remarkable figure which is employed in the text. Some persons affect to despise analogies from nature as a means of fixing and elucidating religious truth. Perhaps these same persons may in the next breath have occasion to speak of a *backslider*, and may speak to good purpose about his sin; but, in so doing, they are unconsciously employing an analogy from matter to explain a strictly spiritual thing. Slide back! nothing more likely when you attempt to climb a steep ascent, where the ground is slippery; but a soul does not slide on a miry road! No; it is a strong figure of speech, in which nature is laid under contribution for the purposes of grace. If you refuse such analogies you may shut both your Bible and your shop. They are necessary both in religious instruction and in the intercourse of common life.

A handle is borrowed from nature, that by its help we may more firmly grasp this spiritual and unseen thing. In the structure of the analogy Body corresponds to Faith, and Spirit to Works. On a general view of the whole subject we would rather expect the reverse : to make faith stand for the living principle within, and works for the body which it animates, is a true and obvious analogy : for some purposes it would be the more appropriate of the two. It would have suited Paul's purpose when his aim was to show that works were nothing without faith ; but it did not suit the purpose of James when he was showing conversely, that faith, so called, without obedience is a worthless name. It is as true that works are the life of faith, as that faith is the life of works. As action in a body is the effect and evidence of a living spirit within, so a holy obedience to the will of God is the substantial proof that the faith which a man professes is a living and not a dead faith. The question here lies not between faith and obedience, but between a true and a spurious faith ; works are put forward, not as a substitute for faith, but as a test of its genuineness. It is an application to this particular case of the Lord's own rule, By their fruits ye shall know them.

Let us now look, in the light of this principle, to some of the leading links in the chain of the apostle's argument ; and for this purpose we shall find a sufficient number of examples within the bounds of the same chapter.

1. At verse 1 ; " My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus, the Lord of glory, with respect of per-

sons." He is beginning a course of practical lessons, but he gives them as the proper accompaniments and consequents of faith. James as well as Paul starts with faith in Jesus as the first and chief; but he proceeds to explain what fruits it ought to bear. Assuming that faith is the first, his question is, What graces of the Spirit go "with" it? He proposes certain lovely virtues, such as humility, self-sacrifice, and brotherly love, not as substitutes, but as companions for faith.

2. Verse 14; "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works?" Here he does not say that faith is profitless; but that it is profitless for a man to "say" he has faith, while his conduct shows that his profession is false. Neither here nor anywhere else does James set aside faith as worthless; that which he denounces is a spurious imitation. Downright earnestness in detecting the false is the natural counterpart of a high value for the true.

3. Verse 20; "Faith without works is dead." It is here neither expressed nor implied that works will justify the doer, while faith will not justify the believer; he only reiterates the former assertion that barren faith is dead, and dead faith is worthless.

4. Verse 24; "Not by faith only." As explained by the whole context his meaning is, Not by a fruitless faith. A faith that stands alone does not justify, for it is a dead faith.

With reference to all these examples, bear in mind that the apostle is straining with his whole bent to stimulate idle professors into a life of positive holiness. There

is no debate here about the person of the Saviour, or his work for sinners ; there is no question as to any doctrine of the gospel. Between the parties to this dispute all the truth was held in common. James is not dealing with infidels to induce them to believe in Christ, but with believers to urge them to active usefulness.

In the earliest and struggling period of the Christian Church hypocrisy was comparatively rare : the only requisite for admission into communion was assent to the truth. So great were the obstacles in those days, that profession was most difficult, and therefore, generally, profession came last. In these circumstances, assent might be held as sufficient evidence ; but when profession became easy, it came first, and often came alone. It is against this tendency, already in his time begun, that James contends ; if we do not discover and remember his aim, we shall miss his meaning ; if we do not take our stand on his view-point, we shall not appreciate the picture which he has drawn.

III. The practical lessons which the text suggests. Both in its doctrinal and its practical aspect the text is obviously and emphatically one-sided : it does not give all the doctrines and all the precepts which bear a relation to the subject. It is not a treatise on theology, but a vigorous stroke for actual holiness. It is the sudden, self-forgetting rush of a good soldier of Jesus Christ, not directly against the opposing ranks of the enemy to drive them in, but against the diverging columns of his own friends, to direct their line of march into the path of

safety. If readers and expounders would consent to carry this key in their hands, it would go far to solve the difficulties which this portion of Scripture presents. If you expect to find here all truth, or even both sides of one truth categorically stated in the manner of a Confession, you will be disappointed; but take it as it is obviously given,—a sharp, fearless blow, dealt by one who loves a specific doctrine of grace against a deforming excrescence which human hands, unskilful and unclean, were busily gluing to its beauteous side, and you will find it profitable specially for correction in righteousness.

The main lesson is, An orthodox profession will not save an unconverted, unsanctified man. So much of the application has already been embodied in the exposition, that to enforce this lesson now in detail would lead to much unnecessary repetition. Accordingly, while we set it here in its proper place, we shall confine it within narrow limits.

We learn from the text, then, that besides those who positively refuse to receive the gospel, some lie under condemnation who acquiesce in its truth and profess to believe. On the surface of the world and the church lie many who are called Christians, and yet are not Christ's. A correct opinion will not waft to heaven a carnal mind. When a breeze blows on a bed of growing willows, all heads bend gracefully; not one resists. But it costs the willows nothing to yield; and when the wind changes, you may see them all pointing the other way. Behold the picture of smooth, hollow, unreal faith! We

learn regarding a certain ancient church, from the testimony of the "true Witness," that they had a name that they lived while they were dead; and the same species of Christianity abounds in the present day.

The outward frame of faith, although correct and complete, is a body dead, if it have not love within, and break not forth in righteousness. In nature, the higher animal organizations are, as a general rule, more noisome in death than the lower. The more perfect the body is while living, the more vile it becomes when it is dead. Faith—the system of revealed truth taken from the Bible, and lying accepted in a human understanding—is a glorious body; but this body dead is in God's sight most loathsome. There is no sight on this world so displeasing to the Holy One, as the profession of trust in Christ without a panting and straining after conformity to his image.

Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness; but Abraham's faith was a living, and therefore a bearing and doing faith. What is your faith doing? It is not our doing that will be our justifying righteousness in the great day; but it is a doing faith, and not a dead one, that unites a believer to Christ and so saves him. It is not the activity of a believer that recommends him to the Judge as righteous; but it is an active believing that makes Christ's righteousness his. Said Jesus, to his fallen and restored disciple in one of his latest interviews, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" "Yea, Lord," replied Peter, "thou knowest all things, and thou knowest that I love thee," (John xxi.) There is a noble confession; will it suffice? No, if it be

dead; and it is dead if it remain alone. Here are the fruits which must flow from its life, and prove that it is living: "Follow thou me;" "Feed my sheep;" "Feed my lambs." If Peter's faith be living, it will do these commandments; his faith, by uniting him to Christ, saves him; and these works are the life of his faith in exercise. When a disciple is "rooted in him" (Col. ii. 7), the more fruit that his life produces, the deeper his faith strikes down for support into the riches of redeeming love; as the living tree must penetrate farther into the sustaining earth for every increase in the area of its fruit-bearing branches.

XXV.

I AM DEBTOR.

"I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise."—ROM. i. 14.

THIS text raises a question on each of three points which, in mercantile phraseology, would be designated—The Business, the Debt, and the Composition.

I. The Business: the nature, sphere, and extent of the trade in which his talents were laid out and his capital invested.

II. The Debt: how, with whom, and to what extent he had become involved.

III. The Composition: in what manner and to what amount the insolvent proposed to pay.

We shall consider these three in their order, drawing our doctrines exclusively from the Scripture, but applying them freely to ourselves and our circumstances as we go along.

I. The Business: the nature, sphere, and extent of the trade in which his talents were laid out and his capital invested.

A merchant, whose capital and credit are embarked in an extensive foreign trade, has gradually fallen into the

habit of doing business also, in a great variety of articles and a great number of petty transactions, with his nearest neighbours at home. The law which reigns majestically among the heavenly bodies soon shows itself paramount also in this terrestrial sphere; a smaller body near attracts more powerfully than a larger at a distance. The home trade of this merchant is so small, that though all its receipts were profits, it would not feed his family; but it is near, and therefore occupies his time and attention much more than in proportion to its worth. Coming personally, on this field, into contact with every customer, he insensibly contracts a passion for dealing in small bargains with every passenger on the wayside. So keen has his appetite become for this species of stimulant that he has lost the faculty of taking an enlarged view, and perceiving the insignificance of the aggregate results. He will higggle an hour with a neighbour for a penny, and spend a day in catering for orders which will scarcely add a shilling to his balance. His heart is in the business, and into it, accordingly, must time and talents go: the remonstrances of reason within, and of friends without, go for nothing. In the meantime rumours are rife that, in one foreign market prices had suddenly fallen before his goods arrived; that in another his agents had sold his cargo and absconded with the proceeds; and that in a third direction an investment, not insured, had been lost at sea. He declines to examine these reports, not because he is sure they are false, but because he does not like the subject. He will not even look into the books of his great foreign trade, because a secret, uncomfortable

presentiment lurks about his heart that the business is not in a prosperous state. To discover that all his capital is gone, and bankruptcy impending, would be unpleasant, and therefore he indefinitely postpones the day of balancing ; but to keep his mind free from these painful reflections, he throws himself with redoubled energy into his huckstering, and exults over the pence or half-pence of profit which each transaction produces.

The man is mad, you say: he is; but probably "thou art the man."

We are all merchants. We have business with both worlds ; but our stake in the one is slight, in the other all but infinite.

It becomes a practical question of the deepest importance to every one of us, whether we distribute our attention between these two in due proportion to their comparative worth. Alas, there are many foolish traders amongst us who seem to pour out their souls in anxiety about the balance of their accounts for time, and leave the interests of their own eternity to sink or swim.

This petty trade is in its own place lawful, necessary, and salutary; it is neither our interest nor our duty to abandon it. The sin and danger lie not in mastering our temporal affairs, but in allowing them to master us : they are good servants, but bad masters. Looking to its sphere, and extent, and returns, this retail traffic at our door is not worth so much care as is generally devoted to it. It does not run so deep as to justify a very absorbing study, a very ardent devotion. Although you succeed in it, you cannot gain much; although you fail in it, you cannot

lose much. A house by the way of larger or smaller dimensions, covering for the body more or less elegant, food more or less sumptuous to satisfy hunger,—these, and a few others of minor moment constitute all the stake that any of us have in our trade with the present world. In the trade with heaven we have a deeper interest: pardon of sin and peace with God, a new heart and a holy life, a glorious resurrection and a life eternal,—these are the treasures which may be lost or won by the indolence or enterprise of dying yet immortal merchantmen. The loss of the larger venture would swamp all the gains of time: although the gain should amount to a whole world, the loss of the soul would turn the balance to the other side.

Paul was a diligent and energetic man. Had he been a merchant, the keenest wit in all the Exchange could not have over-reached him. He closely examined the worth of an article, and nicely calculated how much it would bring. He embarked all in one business, and then pushed it to the uttermost. He did not neglect the necessary and lawful affairs of this life, but his treasure was in heaven, and his heart followed it. News from the far country, where his wealth lay, came like cold water to his thirsting soul. Sometimes, while he was waiting anxiously, a kind of secret telegraphic message reached his heart, intimating that in the hands of his Advocate with the Father his affairs were prospering;—that his investment was safe, and his venture successful;—that already it had secured godliness, a great gain for the present, and for reversion in the future, a crown of glory.

II. The Debt ; how, with whom, and to what extent he had become involved. He was diligent in his business ; and yet was not able to pay his way. This demands inquiry.

However good the position of some may be in regard to the material interests of the present world, it is certain that in their greatest business all men begin in debt. It is an unpropitious starting point. There is nothing in the commencement to warrant or excuse subsequent neglect. We inherit a debt which no actual efforts of our own can ever discharge.

Some heirs would fain get quit of their heritage. When a man discovers that the property which has fallen to him is burdened, not only beyond its own worth, but beyond the worth of all that he possesses, or can ever hope to win, he tries to shake off the encumbrance, but fails. He has laid hold of it, and it has laid hold of him. If there were any hope of success, he might lay his mind to his lot, and strive by industry to diminish gradually his burden ; but if the debt is obviously so great that, in spite of all his efforts, its amount will grow greater every year, he will lose heart and relapse into indolence. The discovery that the case is hopeless cuts the sinews of exertion, and the man abandons himself to his fate.

Such is the condition of men in relation to God. We are born with a debt ; and when we come to the years of understanding, we find out that the capital of that debt has increased during our minority. When we become more skilful in examining the accounts, we discover that the amount of our liabilities, instead of being dimi-

nished, is still increasing day by day. The law, meantime, is laying its awful hand upon the trembler, and dragging him toward the judgment-seat of God: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die."

In this extremity our help was laid upon a mighty One. A daysman came in between the Judge and the guilty, laying his hand upon both. The Son of God, in the covenant, took our nature, and bare his people's sin. He suffered, the just for the unjust. He paid the debt, and bestowed the righteousness; "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." The handwriting that was against them is blotted out: the bond is cancelled, and they are free.

The forgiven sinner is clear in the book of God's judgment; there is absolutely nothing standing against him there; he may hold up his head at the last great tribunal as confidently as the angels who never sinned. The Mediator took his sins, and he has obtained the Mediator's righteousness. In that righteousness he is "without spot and blameless;" but it is self-evident that although he is now out of debt, he is still indebted. Although he owes nothing to the law, he owes much to that Redeemer who bore its curse for him: he owes himself, and his eternal life, to Christ. He is as deeply in debt as ever, but it is of another kind, and due to another creditor. It is now the debt of gratitude, and he owes it to Christ. It is greater than the man can ever pay; but its magnitude is no burden. The more he realizes its greatness, the happier he grows. The apostolic precept regarding debt in human transactions, "Owe

no man anything, but to love one another," seems to have been borrowed from the relation between the saint and his Saviour. In excluding all other kinds of debt, the precept makes an exception in favour of one, leaving it to be inferred that the more of it the better. The one thing which man should owe to man is love; and love is the debt which the redeemed owe to their Redeemer. It is not the same thing that they owe now, nor to the same creditor. Formerly, they owed to the law a perfect righteousness; and because they were hopelessly insolvent, the relations between the creditor and the debtors were of the angriest kind. The hatred was deep, and it was reciprocal. That debt was like a burning fire; but the debt which the forgiven owe to their divine substitute, now that they are free, is totally different in its nature and effects. They owe all to Christ; and to him they owe only love. The amount of the debt is, indeed, to them as good as infinite, and immeasurably beyond all hope of payment in full; but, strange to say, that characteristic which is a sting of torment in other debts, makes this debt unspeakably delightful. When the debt is love, and that due to the Son of God, our Saviour, its sweetness lies in its exhaustless depth. After the debtor has paid all that he was worth during a long life, the debt, instead of being reduced in amount, will be found to have grown greater. It is this that makes the debtor glad. If it were possible that at any period of futurity he should owe less of love to Christ, his joy would be marred. He is a new creature now, and in a new condition. His new condition is, in many respects,

the opposite of the old; and especially in this, that whereas the greatness of his debt of obedience to the law constituted his chief misery, the greatness of his debt of love to Christ constitutes the chief element of his contentment. Here the tender word of Jesus holds true in the experience of his people: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Thus far all is plain. Paul was a debtor to Christ—that we can understand; but here he confesses that he is a debtor to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, to the wise and to the unwise,—that is, to every nation under heaven, and to all classes in each. He intimates that he is a debtor to every human being, without respect to country, character, or condition in life. How comes this? Those Greeks and Barbarians had never done him any good; some of them had done him as much injury as they were able; yet he was labouring night and day to serve them, and exclaiming after he had done his best that he owed them still more.

In the complicated processes of modern merchandise, a man often finds himself in debt to persons whom he never saw, and with whom he never had any dealings. It occurs in this manner: you have engaged in a series of transactions with a merchant at a distance, and the result is a pecuniary balance to a greater or less extent in his favour; while in another series of transactions in which he is engaged with another party, the balance is against him. With a view to the convenience both of himself and his correspondent, instead of getting money from you, and paying money to his creditor, he hands over to

that creditor the claim which he holds against you. Or, to make the analogy more complete, you may suppose that the merchant to whom you owe a sum of money, desires to help certain destitute persons in your city, and to them makes over the bill as an equivalent for money. The person who possesses that claim so transferred, whether the merchant or the pauper, presents it for payment at your desk, and you must pay. You cannot repudiate: the law will enforce the demand in full. Thus you become debtors to persons whom you never saw.

Thus Paul became a debtor to the Greeks and Barbarians of his own day. He owed all that he possessed, and himself besides, to Christ his Redeemer. But he could not directly pay any part of that debt; a man's goodness cannot reach to God. He is not on that account absolved from the duty of paying: the Lord to whom he owes all has transferred his claim to the poor, and Paul is bound to honour it. Paul cannot reach the treasury of heaven to pay his instalments there; Paul's great Creditor, therefore, makes the debt payable on earth; offices are open everywhere to receive it. Wherever there is a creature of the same flesh and blood with ourselves in want, spiritual or temporal, or both combined, there a legal claim is presented to the disciples of Christ; and if they repudiate, they dishonour their Lord.

This principle is exhibited with marvellous clearness and fulness in the story of the woman with the alabaster box of ointment, as recorded in Mark xiv. 3-9. The woman's ardent and profuse devotion to Christ in his own person gives occasion to some ignorant, selfish

observers to set up the claim of alms-giving to the poor, as against devotion to the Lord. These two together—the act and the adverse criticism of it—drew forth from the great Teacher's own lips a lesson which is authoritative to his disciples in all time coming.

The root and life of true religion is personal devotion to a personal Redeemer; thereafter and thereon grows active service in his cause. The first is the heart's devotion to the Lord; the second is the hand's work upon the world. These are the first and second commandments of the New Testament decalogue. Neither of these two can thrive alone: every attempt to separate them ends in some mischievous hypocrisy. Devotion without work degenerates into monkery; work without devotion sinks into a shallow, fitful secularism. The woman lavished on the Lord a devotion which in due time would have borne fruits of charity; the men who found fault with her proposed charity instead of devotion. Christ sanctioned the woman's deed, and reproved the objectors. He accepted the personal homage; but he did not put it in place of kindness to the poor. He permitted the well to open in love to himself, and then, on retiring, left the poor in his place permanently to receive the flow. Me ye have not always: Ye have the poor with you always. He asserted his own rights, and then transferred them to the needy. To himself by redeeming love he draws forth the legacy; and then, ascending into heaven, leaves the poor his heirs.

The woman's impetuous, profuse adoration, and the men's dry, carping, utilitarian proposal to turn the ointment

into cash, lie before us like the pair of pictures, taken from different view points, which either separately or conjointly have scarcely any meaning to the unaided eye : the word of Jesus lays them in the stereoscope, and on the instant, out of the two dim, unintelligible pictures, starts one beautiful, deeply-relieved, life-like truth : On Christ to whom they owe themselves, Christians are pouring out their precious offerings ; and these are all falling into the lap of the poor, whom he at his ascension left in his place.

It is thus that we become debtors to every needy brother of the human family. If we have gotten mercy from Christ, we owe mercy to men. Whatever may be the form of the effort, whether a contribution in money or a personal visit to the poor ; whether the aim for the time be to enlighten the soul or satisfy the body ; whether the field of operation be at home or abroad ; when a Christian acts, and suffers, and gives for the good of men, he is not entitled to compliments for generosity ; he is paying a debt. If he refused to pay it, he would be a dishonest man.

Nor does the world's apathy release a Christian from his obligations. If a company of very poor people held a claim against a citizen for a large sum of money ; and if he should take advantage of their ignorance and poverty to evade the payment, he would be cast out from society as a dishonourable man. In like manner, although those who now hold Christ's claim on us, not knowing its value, do not present it for payment, we are bound in honour to seek them out and discharge our obligations. Christians owe more to the poor than they can ever pay.

When they have done all they are unprofitable servants, The opportunity of being generous does not lie within their reach : when their aim rises highest they are only striving to be just.

III. The Composition ; in what manner, and to what amount the insolvent proposed to pay.

Let it be carefully observed here at the outset, that the most devoted life of a saved man is not offered as an adequate return to the Saviour. As well might he purchase his pardon at first from the Judge, as repay the Redeemer for it afterwards. He pays, not in the spirit of bondage, but in the spirit of grateful love ; not that he looks to a time when the debt will be paid off, but that he delights in the act of paying it. Having announced his principle, the apostle, as his manner was, plunged at once into its practical details ; verse 15, " So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."

No further exposition of the doctrines seems necessary now, and the way is clear for applying them directly to our own circumstances. Adopting the order which is at once natural and scriptural, we shall suggest first some instalments of the debt that are due to parties at home, and then some that are due to parties abroad.

1. At Home. It is not necessary that the debtors should go far away, in order to find a person authorized to receive the payments as they become due. The original creditor has secured that properly qualified receivers should be at hand ; both in the crowded centres

of population and the bleak outskirts of the country, are multitudes to whom Christians are deeply in debt. Our master has supplied us with an unerring formula for determining in every case the validity of the claim: "Love one another *as I have loved you.*" Discover what claim you had on Christ, and that is the claim which a needy brother has on you. Your only claim on the Redeemer's love was your wretchedness; you had no goodness to constitute a right, and your wickedness did not shut you out from his mercy. Wherever, therefore, there is a human being in wretchedness within your reach, to that human being you are a debtor; and you are bound to pay as far as your means will go; behold the open spring of all home-mission effort! It has been observed that when certain reformatory institutions, which at first were supported by voluntary contributions, were transferred to a tax imposed on the community by imperial authority, the difficulties of the managers disappeared, and the coffers were kept full. Ah, the treasury of missions would be always charged, if the authority of Christ's kingdom were as effective in the hearts of Christians, as that of the government on the means and substance of the citizens.

But though we refer to pecuniary revenue for the purpose of illustration, let it not be supposed that it is in money only or chiefly that Christians should pay their debt: if we pay only in money, we do not pay at all. Personal service is the legal tender, and it is only to a limited extent and in certain circumstances that money may be received as an equivalent. Personal dealing with

persons is the law of Christ's kingdom, and the liking of its subjects, when they are in a quickened state. This is the need of our day; this is the direction in which an advance should be sought. It is a conspicuous characteristic of present revivals, that converts are brought more consciously and more closely into personal communion with the Lord Jesus; this is doubtless designed, in the Spirit's administration, to increase the number and the energy of those who go down into the world and grapple, person with person, to bring the lost to the Saviour. When Christ is closer to Christians, Christians will come closer to the world. When every member of the Church shall feel debt to Christ pressing like hunger at his heart, and the work of winning souls like the food which satisfies it, the kingdom of God will advance with rapid strides across the world; these waters issuing from the sanctuary, which now trickle scarcely seen beneath the grass, will speedily become "waters to swim in" (Ezek. xlvii.)

Poor Ireland! Loud complaints are uttered against certain sections of her population,—sections which the recent revival has scarcely reached,—how they settle on our shores, and inoculate the inhabitants with their superstition and their crimes. With a mixture of impatience and levity, it is sometimes said that to dip Ireland for a day beneath the sea would be an effectual cure. It would,—even as to have dipped this world into hell would have rid God's beautiful work of the spots that defiled it. God did not so treat us; for this we are indebted to him; that debt he has made payable to the wretched who partake of our common nature, whatever

their character and deserts may be. Here is a principle which would make this wilderness a garden soon.

2. Abroad. In order to keep our illustration within reasonable limits, let us observe its operation on one field only, and that field India. The many millions of India are, from the Christian view-point, emphatically poor; and they are "with" us in a more intimate sense than other heathen tribes. They are with us as they are not with the French or Portuguese, who once held what seemed a firm footing on their shores. India was taken from nations who have not the gospel, and given to a nation that has the gospel; the providential design it is not difficult to perceive. But the case against this country for not giving the truth to India, becomes much stronger when we look more narrowly into the means by which we acquired possession.

A rich man dies, leaving a large family of young children; and another man, rich too, obtains the guardianship of the orphans. Partly by law and partly by violence, he drives off all competitors, and constitutes himself sole trustee of the wealthy minors: he then proceeds to enrich himself out of the inheritance of his wards, leaving them scarcely enough of food to satisfy their hunger, or of clothing to cover them from the cold. Like the crowned culprit of old, this regal people would doubtless say, when the parable is spoken, "The man that hath done this thing shall surely die." Oh, for some Nathan, commissioned and qualified by the Almighty protector of the poor, to pierce this proud community with that sharp sword of the Spirit: "Thou art the man!"

We have masterfully, not to say unjustly, ousted all other claimants, and assumed absolute guardianship over the vast populations of the Indian peninsula. We have enriched ourselves by the inheritance of those little children, and withheld from them the bread of life. One dreadful warning the Supreme Governor has lately given us; but, although there was a general confession of error while the danger pressed, the nation, if we judge by the sentiments of those who are in power, seems to be relapsing into its former dishonest indifference. As a Christian nation we are debtors to those tribes, whether we count them Greeks or Barbarians, wise or unwise; and after all the chastisement we have endured, we still evince a sullen determination to evade the claim. In this crisis it becomes every disciple of Christ to exert all his influence in his own station, to infuse into the community a better spirit, and so constrain the rulers to desist from an enormous wrong. Let those who govern neither propagate idolatry nor obstruct the gospel; and let the disciples of Jesus, as subjects of another kingdom, combine to pour in the light of life on every portion of that dreary land.

Nor should we adopt the notion, as if it were a fixed principle, that the work in all the stages of its progress, must be slow and gradual: the consummation may come sooner than we deem. Analogies, both from human art and from divine Providence, suggest rather the probability, that by a slow, painful process with scarcely any apparent result, the crisis may be reached, and then the grand object, a nation's birth, be accomplished in a day.

The national life of India seems like a great river frozen. It is covered and bound from bank to bank by a hard, cold coating of superstition which has been gradually thickening throughout an uninterrupted winter of many ages. Having grown out of the nation's life, it has fitted itself on so tightly, that it seems absolutely impossible to extricate the child from its horrid swaddling band. Christian instruction communicated here and there to individuals of the vast population, seems as ineffectual for general results, as an effort to melt the ice of a great river by touching it here and there with burning coals. But these puny artificial fires have nothing in common with our method of melting; we depend on the sun-light, and call upon the God of seasons to send round quickly a genial spring. Yielding ourselves as his instruments, we strive to direct the melting rays upon the young sources of the great life-stream. Some swelling has already commenced, and loud premonitory rendings have been heard running along the ice at various portions of the river's course. When, through the increasing warmth of spring in the fountain-heads, the body of the stream rises to a certain point, the long persistent ice gives way with a crash, and its gigantic fragments rearing and plunging wildly in their defeat, are borne swiftly, inexorably into the sea. It is strangely sweet to stand next day on the brink of that emancipated stream, and see it, completely rid of the cold encumbrance which yesterday bestrode its body, gently rippling on the shore, and brightly glancing in the sunshine as it flows.

It is more probable that the mighty superstitions of India

which begird and choke the life of the nation, will thus be hurried off in a day, than that they will keep their hold, until they are melted piece-meal. Perhaps we may see that consummation sooner than some fainting hearts expect.

In the meantime, it is our part to pay, from day to day, our debt into those hands which the Lord has commissioned to receive it. We concede that these are poor, shrivelled hands which India stretches out,—fouly stained, if you will, with the best of British blood; but, nevertheless, 'tis in the bond that we should do them good. Whether we ought to pay into those hands, does not depend on their cleanness or their foulness, but upon the validity of the claim which they hold. Let your full, bursting hearts pour out their choicest treasures on the head that drooped dying on the cross for you; and, as He does not need your fragrant ointments now, he lets them fall on guilty, wretched India to heal her sores. This is his will and way; you love it, and fall in with it because it is his. Behold the theory and practice of missions! Love to the Lord that bought us opens the spring and draws forth the stream; that stream, by a divinely imposed spiritual law, ever seeks the lowest place; a Christian's compassion, like Christ's, gravitates downward, and fixes on those who need it most.

XXVI.

TO HIM THAT HATH SHALL BE GIVEN :—A
LAW OF THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

“ Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance ;
but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.”
—MATT. xiii. 12.

THIS remarkable saying of the Lord Jesus is, in substance, a generalized formula, capable of being profitably applied to a great variety of cases. The shortest and surest method of explaining a universal rule, is to apply it at once to a particular example. The principle will illustrate the fact ; and the fact will illustrate the principle. The text, standing by itself, may be compared to a manufacturing machine, with all its parts fitted in, and all its wheels in motion. It is beautiful to look upon even now ; but it is only when you feed it with a portion of suitable material, that you can form a judgment of its utility and power. A double benefit then accrues ; you ascertain the power of the manufacturing machine, and get the use of the manufactured article.

At present I propose to place the law of the Sabbath under the action of this great evangelic principle.

In the Sabbath, it is well known, are two blessings, a higher and a lower, a spiritual and a temporal,—each very good according to its kind. One of its uses belongs to the dear children of God’s family, and another to the frail creatures of God’s hand. The Sabbath, like man

for whom it was made, has both a soul and a body. If we preserve its soul alive, we shall enjoy also the benefit of its body ; but if we grasp only the body, we shall lose both. He who used it first himself and then gave it to us, is a jealous God : if we do not appreciate its higher uses, he will permit the lower to be taken away.

Using the text as a blank form, we shall, in this instance, fill it up from the Sabbath law, thus :—Whosoever hath [a spiritual appreciation of the Sabbath's holiness], to him shall be given [also the use of the Sabbath as a day of bodily rest], and he shall have more abundance ; but whosoever hath not [a relish for the holy Sabbath], from him shall be taken away even that [weekly relief from toil] which he now hath.

The neglect of the Sabbath's higher ends involves, by God's law and according to man's experience, the loss of its temporal advantages ; and, conversely, a just estimate of these higher ends opens in the wilderness both the upper and the nether springs for the refreshment of the weary pilgrims.

Let us illustrate the doctrine now by the experience of Nations, Classes, and Persons. Although the same facts and principles appear to a large extent in all these aspects of humanity, and consequently the distinction cannot be strictly maintained throughout the illustration, it will, notwithstanding, be of some advantage to show the operation of the law separately in each.

1. *Nations.* If there were any land in which the higher uses of the Sabbath were universally understood and enjoyed, we should be able to show there, in their

full measure, the temporal benefits with which it is charged ; but, alas, such an example cannot be found on earth. We know what kind of fruit such a tree would bear, but nowhere do we find one growing. In default of a perfect example, we must turn to such imperfect specimens as can be found. In our own country and in America, notwithstanding manifold shortcomings, there is more of true Sabbath sanctification than in any other portions of the world. When a considerable proportion of the citizens individually sanctify the Sabbath, the mass of society is in some measure tinged with a better spirit ; and even in such imperfect examples the principle of our text may be seen in operation. The salt, in proportion to its amount and its diffusion, preserves national privileges for the careless, without their knowledge, or against their will. A weekly rest from toil, as a boon to the labourer, is far more generally enjoyed, and far more securely guaranteed in countries where the sanctity of the day is in some measure respected, than in countries where it has been abandoned to frivolous amusement.

In Popish countries generally, and in some that are nominally Protestant, you may see the operation of the law in its threatening aspect. From those who have not kept the Sabbath holy, the weekly rest has been taken away. It is not necessary to adduce particular facts from the various countries of the European continent ; in general, it is well known, where the people repudiate the gravity of godliness on the Sabbath, the crushing burden of mammon is, in some form, laid upon

their shoulders. In the medley of sounds which constitute the hum of Paris on the Lord's day, a Scottish Christian distinguishes with sadness the clatter of the mechanic's tool. The nation that gives up the day to pleasure does not retain the day for rest.

In a western county of Ireland I have seen, in one view, the children on the Lord's day playing ball against the wall of the chapel, and the grown people with brows sweating and backs bent reaping in the harvest-field. The daily wages of a workman in that country that year (1847) were twopence and his food. These simple facts contain several useful lessons: where the people of their own will make the Sabbath a day of sport, it will, against their will, become a day of toil. When a crush begins, the weakest goes to the wall: under the pressure of hunger, the poor man succumbs, and his rest is wrenched away. When the hosts of mammon close round the holy day, like an army investing a fortress, frivolous amusements have not pith to hold it: if light frothy pleasures have possession of the citadel, they are easily driven in, and a huge tide of toil inundates the labourer's rest. If you keep the Lord of the Sabbath by your side, filling its space with his word and worship, the onset of the enemy may be easily repelled; but when the people grow weary of God's service, banish sacredness from the day, and fill it up with mirth, they have lost their almighty defender, and lie at the mercy of the foe: the money power will surround them, and wrest away their birthright. When they repudiate the greater use of the Sabbath, they cannot retain the less.

I have never seen a gang of labourers at ordinary work in the fields on the Lord's day in Scotland, and I have never heard of a full grown man working for twopence a day there, at least in this generation. The community who part with their birthright do not even get a mess of pottage in return. Those who buy the workman's Sabbath never pay for it ; those workmen who sell their Sabbath, sell it for nought.

2. *Classes.* Hitherto we have spoken chiefly of the law as it operates on large communities ; now we speak of it as it affects particular classes and characters within a community. Those classes in a great city or a nation who most fully employ the Sabbath for its higher ends, most fully enjoy its subordinate benefits : those who renounce the spiritual, lose the temporal too.

The operation of the rule may be distinctly seen in the experience of those workmen who fear God and sanctify the Sabbath, in our own community ; having much, they obtain more. The room is occupied, and the evil spirits cannot come in : to fill the day with spiritual worship is the sure and only way of keeping out physical toil. These men do not enjoy the boon as a matter of course, and without an effort : speculators approach them from time to time, and bid for their Sabbath. To some pleasure is offered as the price, and to others profit. In certain circumstances these temptations exert formidable power. If the labourer had no other defence than an inference from the doctrines of political economy, to the effect that the transaction would be unprofitable in the end, he could not long hold out. His principle may be

sound, and his inference correct, but they lack the power to protect him. The appetite for food or for pleasure would soon force all the defences that even sound economic philosophy could rear around the day of rest. To keep the day holy because it is the Lord's is a shorter process: it takes hold of a man by the conscience, and that is the surest hold; when a law or a practice is deeply bedded there, it will not so readily slip even under a great strain. Some companies who have enticed their labourers to work on the Lord's day, have proposed to give them Tuesday instead of it, as a day of rest: but the plan must necessarily fail at the first trial. What the mercantile company give to-day, they can take away to-morrow. Workmen who are wise will not consent to hold their weekly day of rest at the will of any body of capitalists; they hold their title directly of the Supreme, and it is recorded in the oldest charter extant. When these men keep the day for God, God keeps the day for them.

A class of an opposite character may be found in the same city, and even in the same street; they do not recognise the Sabbath as a day of religious exercises and spiritual worship; they do not read the Bible; they have lost the way to the worshipping assembly, or never found it. These have not the Sabbath in its higher employment, and therefore it is taken away from them in its lower uses. Their souls do not appreciate its sacredness; and therefore their bodies do not enjoy its ease. They are under the inexorable law: "He that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath."

There may be here and there an exception, in which

infidel opinions are allied to sobriety of outward conduct ; but among the labouring population this is the exception. The rule, as all who mix among the people know, is that those who do not make a good use of the Sabbath make a bad use of it ; generally those who do not make it a time of spiritual profit to their souls, find it a time of material injury to their bodies. Until a recent period the irreligious portion of society in Scotland made the day of rest the chief day of debauch. Workmen who deserted the church, frequented in large numbers the public-house ; and so far were they from being prepared by rest for the labour of the following week, that Monday was the day on which the greatest number of hands were missing from the workshop. When they refused to rest with God on his day, the devil would not suffer them to rest at all. They were kept toiling in the fires for a hard master all the Sabbath, and were therefore on Monday more worn than they would have been if no Sabbath had ever dawned. This terrible feature of our city's wickedness has of late been greatly changed for the better, not by a spontaneous movement of the Sabbath breakers, but by a more paternal legislation. The measure which shut the houses where intoxicating drinks are sold, on the day when all other places of merchandise are shut, was a tardy instalment of justice and mercy to a wretched crowd of self-destroying men. To shut by law all ordinary places of business, and open the spirit-shops, was an act of national suicide : if that policy were thoroughly and permanently reversed, it would leave, at least, a fair field for educational and missionary operations.

While we are speaking of classes in the community, it may be of use to point out that by the ordinations of providence each is made his brother's keeper, and punished if he prove unfaithful to his trust: those who without mercy deprive their neighbour of his rest to-day, may without mercy be deprived of their own to-morrow. If clerks and shopkeepers for their own pleasure keep seamen, and firemen, and enginemen bound to their ordinary tasks on the day of rest, they may soon find themselves compelled, for the pleasure of another class, to sit at the desk or stand behind the counter all the seven days of the week. If one trade must toil, why should not another? At present you have not the will to preserve your brother's rest; by and by you will lack the power to keep your own. But what of the capitalist who uses the appetites of one class to enslave the other, in order that he may make money out of both? By the loss of the Sabbath's sacredness which he does not value, the money which he does value will become less worth. An estate will not bring so much in a country where the Sabbath is profaned, as in a country where it is kept holy: the long arm of vengeance in the providential laws reaches the highest of the transgressors, and brings down the strongest.

3. *Persons.* The law holds good in the experience of individuals as well as in that of communities and classes; those who do not value the higher uses of the Sabbath, will fail to attain the lower. That holy day intervening between a week of the great world's strife on either side, is like the hollow path on which the emancipated Hebrews

in the Exodus marched through the sea, with the angry waters rising like a heap on the right and on the left. The waters did not close and cover the fugitives, although it was the law of their nature to do so, because they were held back by the presence of God with his people ; but when Israel had passed over, and Egypt came on, God being no longer with those who occupied the avenue to keep the waters out, the waters came wildly in : the sea, in obedience to its own law of gravity, levelled itself over the path, and all who were in it perished.

As steadily and strongly as the Red Sea's waters pressed in by their own law, to fill that hollow space in their midst, so steadily and strongly the sea of the world's cares presses in to swallow up the Sabbath, which dares to divide it into two. It is not the nature of either sea to stand up like a wall on this side and a wall on that side ; these strong waters are kept at bay by a stronger One ; when he is permitted to depart they will close and cover us.

The only way of keeping the world out of our Sabbath is to keep Christ in. If in our own hearts individually and in our families, we value and enjoy the greater we shall retain also the less ; but if, from want of taste for it, we abandon spiritual communion with the Lord on his own day, the material benefit of bodily rest will slip from our hands. The evil spirits hovering round, press like air upon the privilege ; the moment that they find the room empty they rush in.

If we succeed in cherishing the living soul of the Sabbath, we shall enjoy also a healthy body ; but if we

let the soul slip and cleave to the body, the body without the spirit will putrify in our hands. When the body is dead it becomes noisome, and we are fain to bury it out of our sight. Thus the weekly Sabbath, where its spiritual uses are lost, becomes a loathsome thing. In the experience of individuals and of families, may be often seen the operation of the dread divine law that where the greater is rejected the less is turned into a curse. A Sabbath unsanctified becomes in many cases the vilest day of all the seven; as a body bereft of the spirit becomes more noisome than common dust, When the Lord is banished from his day, the adversary takes possession of it, and makes it the period of heaviest drudgery to his slaves.

Those who strive to induce one portion of the people to play, and another to work on the Lord's day, employ the text, "the Sabbath was made for man," as a staple in their argument. They handle the Scriptures awkwardly—those who grasp a sword by the blade will probably hurt only themselves. It seems a "Sabbath was made" by divine authority; and what is a Sabbath? It is rest, especially rest of a religious character. This is the meaning of the word, and this is the thing which the word has designated in all time. The Lord Jesus said that a rest-day "was made," and he certainly did not unmake it; but who are these who quote the Saviour's words, and at the same time endeavour to demolish the thing which the words signify? God made one day in seven a rest; they propose to change that day also, more

or less, into a day of labour, and then quote the Bible in favour of their plan!

But besides intimating that a rest was appointed by divine authority, that remarkable word of Jesus declares that it was made "for man." This is like the other gifts of God,—like air and water, the rest is for all. But ere this text can really support those who invoke its aid, we must read it, The Sabbath was made for rich men and shareholders, not for firemen and enginemen. The clerk, the guard, the mechanic, the postman, and others whom the passion for gain or pleasure would chain to the oar on all the days of the week, are men ; for these, as well as for others, our Father in heaven made the rest. What God has given, let no man dare to take away.

The Giver of the day of rest knew the dangers to which it would be exposed, and made provision for repelling them. At the same place of Scripture (Mark ii. 27, 28) where we learn that the Sabbath was made for man, we learn also that Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath. It is made for man's benefit, but not given over to his will. Having a large fortune, and an only son, yet a little child, and apprehending that the time of your departure is at hand, you consider anxiously what disposition of the property will best secure the interests of the orphan heir. Paternal love induces you to bequeath your wealth for behoof of your child; but your knowledge of the world will not permit you to place it in his hands; the first sharper who might pass would snatch it from him. You search for one who is wise, and good, and powerful, and constitute him guardian of your infant's inheritance; you

give the treasure to him in trust for behoof of your child.

The Sabbath was made for man; he who contrived and bestowed it knows our need, and makes provision for it with all a father's tenderness. But men are foolish and simple like little children; witness how cheaply they barter the boon away, as far as they have the power in their own hands; our Father in heaven made it for our use, but did not place it at our disposal. Christ has been constituted its Lord, and maintains it for our benefit. In his hands it is in safe keeping; it would have been unsafe in ours. For the privilege let us lean on his authority; greater is he that is for us than all that are against us. God, our Saviour, is legal guardian of the treasure, and will a man rob God? The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath; all the efforts of covetousness and pleasure combined cannot wrench the title-deeds from the trustee's hand.

But beware! the preciousness of the object may, through our blindness, become a snare. Although the image be of pure gold, it is not the less sinful to fall down and worship it. Man was not made for it; it was made for him. We must not serve it, but serve ourselves of it. The Sabbath is not the Saviour; it is a space cleared and left open, for the intercourse between Christ and Christians. If we do not personally meet and commune with the Lord on his day, it will avail us little that the buyers and sellers of this world were driven forth, in preparation for the interview. The Sabbath is to the world like the open space above us, which we are accustomed to call

the firmament, a place to hold the sun; but it will all be dark and cold if there is not a shining sun in its centre, sending light and warmth from its eastern morning to its western eve. The Sabbath is not a light; it is only a cleared space for holding Him who is the light of the world.

The Sabbath, like the Bible, is precious, not for its own sake as an end, but for the sake of Christ, whom believers seek and find in it. Both these good gifts become dead letters when he is not present as their life; but to those who know that chief use, both are fully charged also with subordinate blessings. If we make the Sabbath a day of spiritual communion with its Lord, he will make it for us a day of physical rest from the toils of time. Those who ask the greater get both: those who ask only the less get neither.

Christians, keep company with the Lord in that hollow path between the world's divided waters; and he will keep the path open for himself and you.

XXVII.

SEED TO THE SOWER, AND BREAD TO
THE EATER.

“As the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth.”—Isa. lv. 10, 11.

“Now he that ministereth seed to the sower, both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness.”
—2 Cor. ix. 10.

THE principal lesson of these scriptures may, on the whole, be most conveniently ascertained and enforced by considering,—

I. The Facts in Nature from which the analogy is taken; and—

II. The Spiritual Purpose for which the analogy is employed.

I. The Facts in Nature from which the analogy is taken.

1. God's part in the process: he gives (1.) Seed; and, (2.) Rain.

(1.) He gives Seed. If the annual growth of seed is not itself a perpetual miracle, it is the perpetual evidence of a miracle that has once been wrought. Although its constituent materials are scattered in great abundance

around us, all the men of all the world could not make a seed. If all the seeds which the world contains were crushed at one time, as some are crushed for bread, a loud, but helpless, hopeless wail would rise from earth to heaven. Without a new miracle, as decisive in kind as the creation of a world, the race could not be preserved. At present, grains are silently elaborated out of materials which abound in earth, and air, and water. The elements, mixed without fire or crucible, combine in their proper proportions; there is no deficiency,—no excess. When completed, each grain has life, and the power of reproducing life, down through a thousand generations.

In all the examples with which we are acquainted, whether by personal observation within our own sphere, or the testimony of others beyond it, grain grows from seed by the ordinary processes of nature. If in a single case it should grow without a seed, the fact would be confessed a miracle. But it is self-evident that the first seed did not grow from a seed; therefore the existence of a single grain of wheat is evidence, altogether resistless, that a miracle has been wrought. Philosophy humbly adhibits its signature to the declaration of Scripture, that God gives seed to the sower. And not only seed in general, but every species in particular, is a divine gift; “God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body” (1 Cor. xv. 38). Species and genera do not interchange in nature; it is as much beyond our power to make wheat spring from barley as to make it spring from nothing.

(2.) He gives Rain. Although the grain has been

formed with the capabilities of growth and reproduction in its nature, it cannot grow and reproduce its kind unless it meet with influences, external to itself, fitted to call forth its latent powers. It must have earth, air, light, and moisture: wanting any one of these, all the inherent capabilities of the seed would go for nothing: it would never grow. In the text, moisture by means of rain, the most obvious of these indispensable fellow-workers, stands as representative of the whole. The grain is wonderfully prepared, by its internal structure, for sending forth a bud charged with germs of its kind a hundred-fold; but these would lie dormant as a stone unless the earth that covers them were moistened with water. Wheat has lain beyond the reach of air and moisture in Egyptian tombs, without germinating, probably two thousand years; and has, it is said, immediately sprung and reproduced itself, when again committed to the humid earth, as if unconscious of its long slumber. The internal structure and the external appliances are both alike necessary to reproduction; and God provides both in fitting time and measure.

In reasoning with idolaters who did not possess the Scriptures, Paul appeals to this obvious trace of the Creator's goings: "He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts xiv. 17). Conversely, when God designs to chastise a people with the scourge of famine, it is not necessary to destroy the seed: in this form the stroke sometimes falls, as in Ireland a few years ago, by the

direct and rapid decomposition of the seed which constituted the principal food of the inhabitants; but generally when famine comes, it is caused by the want of rain. Either method is equally effective. It is with partial and limited success that we speculate on the causes of scarcity. We may sometimes succeed in tracing them a few steps higher than the ground; but both the lines penetrate the clouds above us, and lie beyond our view in the hands of "a faithful Creator" (1 Pet. iv. 19).

2. Man's part in the process: he sows and eats.

In all the arrangements of the Mundane system there is a marked adaptation to the physical and moral discipline of man. In nature as well as in grace, it might be written, "All things are for your sakes" (2 Cor. iv. 15).

One could imagine a globe like the earth so constituted that all its crust, to an indefinite depth, should consist of matter fit to be the food of man. It would be a jovial world for a savage, if he had nothing more to do than go to the end of his hut in the morning, with a spade and sack, and quarry as much food as would supply his family for the day;—but in all probability none but savages would grow in such a world. As a dwelling-place and exercise-ground for the human family, the earth is better as it is. By giving "seed to the sower," and so providing bread to the eater, our Father in heaven has consulted better for all the interests of his children: by requiring their consent and co-operation he promotes them to the dignity of fellow-workers with himself. The apparatus in nature for the production of human food is like a vast and complicated piece of machinery, moving in exquisite harmony,

and possessing indefinite power; but it clanks empty and produces nothing, until men come forward and feed it. The Creator's preparations do not feed men, without men's foresight and labour: this is not the defect, but the perfection of the plan.

Sowing and eating are closely related; if a man did not sow, he could not long continue to eat; and if he did not eat, he could not long continue to sow. By his forethought and toil from spring to autumn, he is enabled to eat in plenty throughout the succeeding year; and in the strength of this food he undergoes the fatigue necessary for bringing the next harvest to perfection. God gives seed: but he gives it only to the sower. He does not deposit a continent of food within reach of human animals that they may eat and drink and die; the sustenance of man is as certainly and as obviously the gift of God, as under such an arrangement it would have been, but the gift is so fashioned as to stimulate the activity of the receiver and bring to perfection all his powers.

II. The Spiritual Purpose for which the analogy is employed.

Hitherto we have been occupied with the preparatory work of setting up the types: we now proceed to turn them over and press them home, in the hope of leaving a legible page where simple learners may obtain a lesson on the Way of Life. The letters are in themselves instructive as the works of God in nature; but their chief value lies in their fitness as instruments for recording and unfolding the mind of the Spirit in redemption. For

that purpose they were used even by Isaiah; for that purpose too they were gathered up and reset by Paul, in a new edition of Isaiah's gospel. The narrative of natural events is introduced expressly as a vehicle for conveying a higher truth: it is written, "*As the rain cometh down, so shall my word be.*"

The natural process has, in all its principal features, its counterpart in the kingdom of grace. There also, God's gifts and man's labour combine in producing the beneficial result.

1. God's part: he gives Seed and Rain.

(1.) Seed. His word is compared frequently, emphatically, specifically, to grain, both in its quality of seed, and in its quality of food. From the lips of the Great Teacher we learn that the seed which the sower goes forth to sow is the word of God. The spiritual seed is as exclusively God's gift as the natural. Men could no more make a real gospel, endowed with life and reproductive power, than they could make a grain of wheat capable of growing. The curse came heaviest upon the moral aspect of the world; of itself it bringeth forth only thorns and thistles. Examine the various systems of religion which men have invented; these are the things that grow of themselves on a soil that sin has blighted. They are both unsightly in appearance, and noxious in nature. Can a man gather grapes from these thorns? Can a soul live on any of the abominations of idolatry? You might as well expect your child to live and thrive, if instead of bread you gave him a stone,—instead of a fish a serpent. In both departments permanence and

plenty are secured by a process of sowing and reproduction in which man must be a fellow-worker; but in the origin of both God acts alone. He took no creature into his counsel when he gave to the seed of grain and to the seed of the word "a body as it pleased him." In framing the plan of redemption and bestowing the "unspeakable gift," God is absolutely sovereign and free.

On the day of Pentecost, soon after the Lord had ascended into heaven, the Spirit, appropriately symbolized as "a rushing mighty wind," suddenly caught up the seed at Jerusalem and spread it in many lands. In Greece and Africa, in Spain and Italy, in Arabia, Persia, and even India, fields whitened to the harvest. There has been no such "rushing mighty wind" since; but here and there, from time to time, the Spirit has come, and in greater or smaller measure wrought the same result, as if to proclaim to each generation that we are not straitened in him.

But soon after that first and greatest sowing, a long cold, barren winter came upon the church. Those who assumed the charge of the word gradually ceased to live upon it as bread, and therefore ceased to sow it as seed; gradually ceased to sow it as seed, and therefore obtained less and less of it to live upon as bread. The priests of Rome sometimes boast that Protestants are indebted to them for preserving the Bible till the fifteenth century. In one sense, not to their credit, they were the means of preserving it. The priests of ancient Egypt, for some object which we cannot now fully understand, but perhaps with allusion to the resurrection, were wont to wrap up

some grains of wheat with the embalmed body in the rocky tombs. This seed, when removed from its sepulchral imprisonment of ages, has been of late sown; and if those who conducted the experiment were not deceived, it grew and multiplied, thanks to its own wonderful vitality, not to the wisdom of heathen priests, who wrapt the living in the cerements of the dead. Such was the service which Rome during the middle ages performed for the Bible. Ignorant of its value, the monks occupied their leisure in fancifully decorating and perfuming it. Having dressed it as a corpse, they buried it in their cloisters. While it lay there during those dreary centuries it did not bless the world, but it retained its own vitality; and when its grave was rent by the earthquake commotions of the Reformation, it became seed again in the sower's hand, and bread to satisfy hungering nations.

(2.) Rain. Seed, after it has been given by God and sown by man, is not more entirely dependent for growth on rain from heaven, than the word preached is dependent on the ministry of the Spirit. As the power lay in God's hands at first, and it was of his own free will that he gave his word as seed; so he retains the power in his own hands still, for the seed which has been committed to earthen vessels will never and nowhere spring until the Spirit be poured out like rain on the dry ground. Some fields have been of late greatly refreshed; this is "a sign from heaven" that God remembers his promise, and loves to answer prayer. The gift lies absolutely in his hands; let us own and honour his sovereignty—he

delights to bestow the gift; let us plead in the spirit of adoption, and count on the kindness of a Father's heart. He who gives "rain from heaven and fruitful seasons," is able to refresh his heritage when it is weary. Perhaps if we were as sincere, and hearty, and persistent in our longing for the Spirit to quicken the seed of the word in human souls as for the rain to moisten our fields in spring, the spiritual husbandry of the nation would prosper as well as the natural.

2. Man's part. To the sower seed is given; to the eater bread. A specific place has been divinely assigned to man in the administration of the gospel, like the place which he occupies in the processes of nature; here, too, he must sow and eat, eat and sow.

(1.) He must sow. The seed of the word has not been created in our days. The law was not spoken amidst fire and smoke from the mountain-tops of our land; the man Christ Jesus did not go out and in among our villages in the days of our youth, preaching the kingdom of heaven. The gospel began in another part of the earth, and thence it was brought to this country many ages before we were born. The seed was faithfully sown by our forefathers; they often sowed in tears, and it is owing to their courage and diligence that we now reap in joy.

Some countries where the gospel was planted early and flourished long are now completely desolate. If one generation has failed to sow, the next generation perish for want of food, whether the failure was due to violence from without or indolence within. Both physically and morally each generation depends on the one that preceded

it; this is the will of God and the constitution of the world. The growth, and even the continued life of the child is left dependent on the parents; at a time when it can neither judge nor act it lies at their mercy, and they may be neither intelligent nor kind. In a similar way, intellectually and morally, the generation rising up is moulded by the generation now in the ascendant.

One person and one people grow up with Christianity as their religion, and European learning as the staple of their intellectual education; another person and another people grow up with Brahminism as their religion, and Asiatic fables as the food of their minds; under the divine sovereignty, indeed, the diversity is permitted, but instrumentally it is all due to the sowing of far-removed progenitors. Each generation of men is a link in a hanging chain; it hangs in the link above itself, and bears up those that are below. When any one gives way, all that are beneath it fall.

Why should people stumble so much at the doctrine of the fall in the person of our first progenitor?—it is not a new or strange thing. The doctrine that sin came into the world by one man, and that we all became sinners and sufferers by our connection with one who died long before we were born, is a stumbling-block to many when they meet it in the Scriptures; but they meet the same thing in the world every day. This people are in a good position religiously, intellectually, and economically to-day, because their forefathers sowed the good seed; and that people are in a bad condition, because their forefathers neglected to sow it. Speculate as you

may about the reason or the effect of it, but there it is.

In Asia Minor, for example, where John preached the love of Christ, and true Christians for several generations were nourished by the bread of life, the children are now taught to believe the imposture of Mahomet, because many hundred years ago their forefathers, through spiritual declension or external violence, ceased to sow the seed of the word. It is as foolish to deny the doctrine as it would be to kick against the fact. To stand upon the brink and look down into these depths is not fitted to gratify our pride: may it increase our humility! What we enjoy we did not make. The source of our privileges is the sovereign love of our Father in heaven, and the faithfulness of our fathers on earth is the channel by which they have reached us. We have nothing that we did not receive.

The inference is obvious: having gotten bread to eat through the faithfulness of our fathers, let us sow the seed for the benefit of our children. We are a link in the middle of the chain: if we fail, our followers perish. We are our children's keepers; if we do for them what our witnessing forefathers did for us, they will rise up and call us blessed.

In the spiritual as well as in the natural harvest reaping is a joyful thing; but the sowing is often a painful process. Those who bear the precious seed often go forth weeping; but all the brighter on that account is their joy when they bear the ripened harvest home, (Psalm cxxvi.) A deeper love for souls would make Christians

mourn more over the low estate of the world; this sorrow would send them out to sow; the seed sown with tears comes quickly away, and yields a large return. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

(2.) He must eat. As in the natural, so also in the spiritual department, we sow the food on which we live, and live upon the seed which we sow. The same word is the seed which the sower sows, and the bread which the eater eats.

If any one should sow every day and never eat, he would fade away and die: the strange phenomenon would be presented of a man providing food for others, and dying for want himself. In the natural husbandry no such case occurs; in the spiritual husbandry it occurs frequently, although perhaps it may not proceed far; in point of fact, he who does not live on the word as his soul's food, will not long continue to sow the word for the good of the world. The spiritual food is supplied to us after the analogy of the natural. God does not give the children of his family a heap of sustenance, which without labour will last their lifetime; bestowed in the form of seed, it is enjoyed always fresh and new. The exercise of sowing produces a healthful appetite for eating; and the appetite for eating stimulates to the labour of sowing. In this circle the new world goes round. "Work out your own salvation"—"for it is God that worketh in you."

There are two ways of treating the seed. The botanist splits it up and discourses on its curious characteristics; the simple husbandman eats and sows; sows and eats.

Similarly there are two ways of treating the gospel. A critic dissects it ; raises a mountain of debate about the structure of the whole, and relation of its parts ; and when he is done with his argument, he is done. To him the letter is dead ; he neither lives on it himself, nor spreads it for the good of his neighbours. He neither eats nor sows. The disciple of Jesus, hungering for righteousness takes the seed whole ; it is bread for to-day's hunger, and seed for to-morrow's supply.

But the scientific botanist may also be a husbandman ; and wise is he, if he use his technical knowledge of the seed in sowing it more skilfully. He who examines most keenly the letter of the word, may get the spirit too. Criticism is lawful and useful when it helps us to live upon every word of God. Those who have most learning must at last come down to the level of those who have none. As might have been expected under the government of our Father in heaven, that which is necessary to life is within the reach of all ; the gospel preached to the poor is an acknowledged evidence that Christ has come. The philologist and the theologian must go down and stand beside the unlettered peasant, and there, with him and like him, eat and sow the word of eternal life. The greatest scholar who only dissects seed will die of hunger soon ; while the simplest countryman who eats and sows it will live and prosper. Beware of resting in a hard dry dissection of doctrines ; after all our museum knowledge of the structure of the seed, we shall die in the midst of plenty, unless the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ become the daily bread of our souls.

Two men come to the judgment-seat of Christ. One says, Lord, I found the seed which thou didst send from heaven ; I examined its wonderful structure and demonstrated its divine origin ; I separated and classified and named all its constituent elements ; my labours confirmed the friends, and convinced the enemies of the truth. The other says, Lord, I found thy seed ; being hungry, I fed on it ; being anxious for the future, I sowed it ; of the harvest which it produced I ate more abundantly myself, and distributed to all my neighbours. That man dies of want ; this man lives and transmits life to succeeding generations.

“ Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven ; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life ; he that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst” (John vi. 32-35).

There is bread enough ; “Blessed are they that hunger!”

XXVIII.

THE PEACE OF GOD RULING IN THE HEART.

“Let the peace of God rule in your hearts.”—Col. iii. 15.

IN the text, when thus isolated, are these three things,—

I. The Place where power is put forth—“in your hearts.”

II. The Manner in which power is put forth there—“rule.”

III. The Power which is put forth there and thus—“the peace of God.”

To help the memory, we may call them—*The Region*; *The Reign*; *The Ruler*.

I. THE REGION: where the ruling power touches, and takes effect—“*in your hearts*.” “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” “The kingdom of God cometh not with observation. Neither shall they say, Lo, here; or lo, there: for behold the kingdom of God is within you.” “My kingdom is not of this world.” “My son, give me thine heart.”

How practical and plain-dealing is the word of God! It does not go about the bush. It makes a straightfor-

ward, pointed appeal. This word comes to you, brother; and it tells its errand aloud. God its author desires to have you; to have you brought into subjection, and employed in righteousness. He puts forth his hand to arrest you in your rebellion; to uplift you from the deep. He comes forth to seek and find you; to bring you back to himself, that the mansions which he has prepared may be peopled with sons and daughters. He desires to draw you with an everlasting love, and therefore he comes into your heart and fastens the cord there.

The Author of the Bible is the Maker of man. He knows our frame. He knows, he feels the measure of the force with which the carnal mind departs from the living God, and provides the power necessary to counteract and overcome it. He knows the point in the complex constitution of his creature where divine love should be applied, in order that it may have purchase and power to arrest and restore.

The heart, as it is called by a metaphor common to Scripture and the language of ordinary life, is the regulator of the whole man. It means the will and the affections, as distinguished from the intellect. It is the choosing faculty, as distinguished from the knowing faculty. It is that in man which fastens impetuously on an object loved, without waiting in all cases for a decision of the judgment whether the object is worthy.

In the regenerated man both faculties are restored to healthy action. The mind becomes capable of knowing the true, and the affections disposed to fix on the holy.

But, although in the just made perfect, these two will be equally renewed, they differ both as to order and importance during the process. Both in "the fall, and the rising again" the heart goes first, and is chief. There the disease begins, and there the remedy must be applied. By the fall, the heart has become deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; in the regeneration, the heart is made new. By sin it becomes a stony heart; through grace it becomes a heart of flesh. It is there that the fool says, No God; and there that God our Saviour dwells when the possessed has come to himself again. This heart of man is the great battle-field of the world. Satan triumphed there; and thence a Stronger casts the usurper out. The heart of the children of men is set in them to do evil; to turn it again like a river of water, and cause it to flow towards God and goodness, is the errand of Christ to earth. After his ascension the message which he sent by that apostle who had lain closest to his bosom, and who lingered longest behind in life, is, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man open, I will come in."

It is by this heart that the attitude is determined, the path traced out, and the impulse given. When the heart is drawn in one direction, the whole man follows. To sin, and death, and hell the man madly follows, when the heart has tasted its forbidden pleasures and leads the way; as the ox runs towards the shambles, drawn by the scent of blood on the butcher's hands. Down the slippery incline the heart leads the unresisting victim, although the understanding should perceive and the

conscience proclaim that these "steps take hold on hell." When you endeavour to arrest a brother who is thus drawn unto death, you must get hold of him by the heart; for although you gain his judgment to the side of righteousness, the judgment has not power to reverse the movement, or even to slacken the speed. The heart's affections, strong and foul like a river in flood, bear the victim down, and the breath of a better judgment, though it blows in the right direction, avails not to turn and save.

On this torrent we all lie; and with it we are carried impetuously down. The rush of an evil heart's affections, like other swollen streams, will not yield to reason. When God by his word and Spirit comes to save, he saves by arresting the heart and making it new.

An engine, dragging its train on the rail, is sweeping along the landscape. As it comes near it strikes awe into the spectator. Its furious fire and smoke, its rapid whirling wheels, its mighty mass shaking the ground beneath it, and the stealthy quickness of its approach—its whole appearance and adjuncts make the observer bate his breath till it is past. What power would suffice to arrest that giant strength? Although a hundred men should stand up before it, or seize its whirling wheels, it would cast them down, and over their mangled bodies hold on its unimpeded course, with nothing to mark the occurrence but a quiver, as it cleared the heap! But there is a certain spot in the machinery where the touch of a little child will make the monster slacken his pace, creep gently forward, stand still, slide

back like a spaniel fawning under an angry word at the feet of his master.

A ship driven by fierce winds is gliding with all the momentum of great bulk and great speed forward—forward upon a sunken rock, where the gurgling breakers greedily, gloomily predict her doom. What apparatus can you bring to bear on the devoted vessel? What chain thrown around her bows will bring her to a stand? The massiest cable coming across her course will snap like a thread of tow! But a touch by a man's hand on the helm will turn the huge mass sharply round, and leave it standing still upon the surface, with its empty sails flapping idly in the wind.

These great works of man laugh to scorn every effort to arrest their course by direct obstructive force; and yet they are so constructed that a gentle touch on a tender place makes all in an instant still.

This greatest work of God, more wonderful by far—this man—this self of me—moves with a greater impetus to a deeper, longer doom. Moving from birth in the direction of death, the immortal gathers momentum every hour, bursting through all the resolutions and efforts of himself and his neighbours, as Samson broke the withes that were twisted round his wrists. How Paul wept when he found that his wild heart would brook no restraint of his better judgment! I *find* a law in my members, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. No power in heaven or earth will arrest that downward fall, unless it be laid upon the heart. The human being is so constituted that a touch there may turn him,

but nothing else will. Oh, to be arrested by the heart! Unless Jesus cast the bands of his love about that heart, as we are rushing past, there remains nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment. Lord, grasp me there. Lord, save me, I perish. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.

When they told the blind beggar at the way-side that Jesus was passing by, he rose and ran, and cried, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me!" *My heart, Lord! arrest it; subdue it; make it new.* "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me."

II. THE REIGN: the manner in which the heart is possessed and controlled—"rule."

The word translated "rule" in this text is very peculiar; it occurs nowhere else in Scripture. But although the word is only once employed, its meaning is neither difficult nor doubtful. It is borrowed from the practice of the Greeks at their great national games; or rather, the Greek language was formed upon Greek history, and the scriptures of the New Testament adopt the language as a vehicle to reveal God's will. Hence, in a way altogether natural and necessary, great spiritual facts and laws are frequently expressed by words that were originally cast in the mould of Greek customs, or jurisprudence, or warfare. This word relates to the prize for which the athletes contended in the stadium. A monarch, or other chief presiding, held the prize in his hand, while the contest proceeded, and conferred it on the victor at

the close. Thereby he exercised over the runners or wrestlers a peculiar kind of rule. By the display of that prize he led, he impelled them. They felt the impulse, and gave their whole being over to its sway. The word which designated the office and power of this president is the "rule" of our text.

This is different from the rule which a king exercises over his subjects, or a master over his servants. It is more pervading, more complete than theirs. In every emergency men are fain to resort to it when other authorities fail. When a valuable jewel is lost, or a murderer escapes from the hand of justice, if the sense of duty and the magistrate's command suffice not, the last resource—last, because strongest—is to offer a reward. This is a force which reaches far, and penetrates deep: it finds out the person who can do the work, and constrains him to do it. This species of rule avails to accomplish the object when other kinds have proved impotent.

This is the kind of rule which man's Maker applies to man's heart. By hope are ye saved; or by despair lost. "There is no hope; we have followed idols, and after them will we go:" or, "There is bread enough in my Father's house," and love enough in my Father's heart: "I will arise and go to my Father." Thus were the Hebrews ruled throughout their long pilgrimage in the wilderness. The promised rest, ever displayed before their weary eyes, held them up and drew them on. Even Jesus was, in this respect, made like unto his brethren: it was for the joy that was set before him

that he endured the cross and despised the shame. It was the same species of force that generated Paul's impetuous and persevering movement—forward, upward. That crown of glory which by faith he saw glittering already in the righteous Judge's hand, held his heart as with a magnet's mysterious drawing, and slackened not until his course was finished and the victory won. The long train of worthies commemorated in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews, where every verse is a hero's monument, felt, too, this resistless impulse, and followed whithersoever it led. Their whole life declared aloud that they sought a city, and expected it, too, as the issue of all their sufferings—"a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." Promises such as God makes, and the godly cling to, are indeed exceeding great and precious: they are the anchor of the soul which blessed hope holds by, until the soul reaches the rest that remaineth, and needs no more an anchor, because it feels no more a sea.

Be not deceived by great swelling words, or secret deceitful thoughts about being free. Freedom from rule is not competent to man; the only choice he has is a choice of masters. Every spirit here is ruled, the boldest as well as the most timid—ruled by motives swaying his heart, as a feather is borne on the wind, or a withered leaf on the bosom of a torrent. Your body is held by gravitation to the surface of the earth, and the earth is kept by gravitation moving in its orbit round the sun. In these respects we are ruled. We are absolutely helpless in the hands of matter, and its laws, and its

Lawgiver. This cord binds us and carries us, whether we will or not, millions of miles through space every day. Suppose one of these comets to be a vast world of fire; and suppose that it lies at a certain point in space forward many millions of miles on the earth's orbit; suppose that the earth going forward must meet it, like the collision of two ships in the sea, and that the meeting is destruction to the earth and death to all that live on it. The wail of all mankind in the prospect will not save them. Forward! forward all must go to meet their doom! They cannot flee. Freedom of motion, indeed, we have through a little space on this planet's surface; but the planet and all its inhabitants are, in the meantime, inexorably drawn on in a determined route, and at a determined velocity, by laws and forces absolutely beyond their control.

Now, the rule in the world of spirit is as absolute as in the world of matter: we are ruled, not rulers. There is, indeed, a liberty to choose and to refuse,—a liberty such as suits the creature, and such as the all-wise Creator has bestowed,—it is all we have, and all we need; but it is like the liberty of moving from place to place on the earth's surface, while the earth with us upon it follows another drawing, and obeys another law. In kind and degree the little liberty which man possesses is the very liberty that suits him best. Oh! if all were in his own power, and subject to his own will, who then should be saved? The only hope of fallen, falling spirits, lies in the will of the Infinite compassing their will about, and carrying them and theirs by a way

which they know not. We have a will, and room for its exercise: we have a will; but God has one too! and his will wraps itself round us and our will, and all our world; and for his own glory and our good, binds us, and carries us whither of ourselves we would not go. Saul of Tarsus had free will, and vigorously exercised it on that journey to Damascus; but it is good for him now that another will, almighty, was thrown round him and his world that day, and carried him another way—carried the man and his will too into Christ.

III. THE RULER: the power that sways a human heart and so saves and sanctifies the man—“*the peace of God.*”

1. It is God and no idol that should rule in a human heart. Ever since the fall other lords have had dominion over it: the grand design of the gospel is to drive the intruders out, and regain the kingdom for its rightful Lord.

We cannot enumerate these evil spirits which possess and rule men's hearts; their name is legion. Some are vain, and some are vile. The devil does with us as he tried to do with the Sinless one,—shows us the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, that he may rule in our hearts thereby.

The conflict in and for the kingdom of a human heart is like that great trial between Elijah and the prophets of Baal. It is one, with God upon his side, against four hundred. It is a war in which there is no quarter on either side: if they prevail, the witness will be silenced, and God, whom he served, cast out; if he prevail, they will all be destroyed.

In the course of life there are many changes of masters—at least many changes of the guard which the god of this world sets over his prisoners. When a man, in the state of nature, passes from youth to age, he changes his master, but is still a slave: when he passes from death into life in the regeneration, he escapes from Satan's bondage, and becomes the subject of the living God: he is never for a moment free. Formerly, he obeyed the law of sin in his members against the authority of God in his conscience; now, his heart obeys the law of God, and struggles against still indwelling sin as his foe; but first and last, then and now, he obeys. No man can serve two masters; but every man at every moment of his life serves one.

If suddenly by a miracle our eyes were opened to see spiritual things, as we now see material, what a sight would meet our eyes, what a scream would escape our lips! We would be amazed to learn who is our neighbour's master, and ashamed to let our neighbour see who is our own. It is not to whom you say, Lord, Lord; but who really rules in your hearts.

2. But more particularly: when it is settled that God should rule supreme in the hearts of men, the question is suggested, What special attribute or manifestation of his being and character asserts and exercises the sovereignty there?

It is not his *wrath*. The terrors of the Lord are great, but they do not exercise supreme sway in a human heart, and lead all its affections whithersoever they will. His anger is not a ruling, leading, drawing power. It is

mighty, but not to save. It is a force that casts the wicked into hell; but not a force that can win any son of man near in willing obedience. It is not a force in that direction. The stream of the Mississippi is a great power: it floats loaded ships or fallen forests downward with great velocity to the sea; but it cannot impel one tiny boat upward to the fertile regions near its source. This is done by another and an opposite power: a breath from heaven in the sail will carry the vessel up against the stream. So with the manifested terror of the Lord against all unrighteousness of men; its power is great—greater than we can know—who knoweth the power of thine anger?—but it does not lead any one any way in the path of righteousness.

Not this, but the *peace* of God rules in a human heart. This is a sufficient power, acting in the right direction, and laying hold at the proper place. The power lies in the cross of Christ; and if you would see it, you must look unto Jesus. God has given his own Son to bear iniquity and make reconciliation. He gives, and delights to give, free pardon and eternal life to lost sinners for Jesus' sake. The invitation is, "Come unto me"—"Whosoever will, let him come"—"Him that cometh, I will in no wise cast out," and "there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." God, in the act of pardoning a sinner for his dear Son's sake, makes an absolute separation in the man's account between him and his sins. The pardoned man knows and says, "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquity; O Lord, who shall stand?" But he lays himself down in peace,

knowing that God has marked his sins to the Saviour, and the Saviour's righteousness to him. Sin is taken away, and wrath. There is now no condemnation; there is peace. This is the greatest thing for man. For you and me to-day, the greatest thing is to be pardoned and reconciled. Peace with God; if I have that, I may want anything—all things.

But this peace as a *ruling power*—what effect does it produce? It is an old fear, and has continued till this day, that to set a man so free will encourage him in evil. Will this simple, instant, free, complete pardon of sin by God, not make sin seem a light thing to the man! No; nothing makes sin appear so sinful as its pardon through Christ crucified. The objection is an honest one, but it is not well founded. A blind man may honestly say the day is dark, or a foreigner say your language is obscure, when the day is bright and the words transparent; but they know no better. God's peace,—his pardon, holds a heart from sin, and rules it in holiness. The effects which this peace is expected to produce, as is largely indicated in the context, are the common virtues of the Christian life, with love as usual for their climax and crown. The bond is not visible to the natural eye, but it is not therefore feeble: even in nature, the bonds that are invisible and intangible are surest, and strongest, and most enduring.

If you had been present when the Creator framed these worlds, and set them in motion, you would have trembled for the consequences when you saw him launch this globe from his hand with such freedom and force

into infinite space. You would have thought, It will fall away, and away for ever, into darkness—into “the blackness of darkness for ever.” You see no bond holding it, and therefore you think it will burst away uncontrolled ; but the law of its Maker unseen compasses this world about, and holds it in. It is far more effectively restrained than if material chains had been thrown around it. Softly, invisibly, but most perfectly, is the heavy ball held, and ruled, and led by a law of God, and made meekly to do its Maker’s bidding.

Thus a sinner pardoned is thrown off free. All his sins are forgiven. God retains no account against him. He is severed from all the past ; and nothing taken thence can now be put in his indictment. The pardoned is pardoned wholly, pardoned freely, pardoned for ever. There is now no condemnation. The Son has made him free ; he is free indeed. But the very hand that freed him still holds him bound. Nay, though it seem a paradox, it is a great and sober truth,—to bind him, sets him loose ; to free him, holds him bound. Those who are still bound over to the judgment by the law’s inexorable grasp on an unclean conscience, are loose in life, run riot in wickedness. “There is no hope ; We have loved idols, and after them will we go.” *It is the act of setting him free that binds him.* There are many glorious paradoxes in the gospel. “When I am weak, then am I strong,” is one : *when I am set free, then am I bound fast*, is another.

Our English word *oblige* may help to explain somewhat the mystery. Its literal meaning is, *tied to* : by

such and such a gift you will *oblige* me ; that is, you *will tie me to you*. I was in your debt : I had by my own fault incurred the debt : you held the bond against me : you held me bound, and could any day have cast me into prison : you cancel all freely : you blot out that handwriting which was against me, by which you held me : you cut it through : you let me clean go. What then? Then and thereby, if there be one spark of truth or generosity in my being, you have bound me to yourself. By setting me free, you have bound me fast ; you have bound me by my heart. The bond is invisible ; but it holds a soul,—it rules a life. Love is the cord of a man ; other cords will hold a brute, but in this only can a human soul be held.

Such, although purer in nature and infinite in degree,—such is God's method in the gospel, of seizing, and binding, and ruling a human heart. It is his peace that rules ; it is his act of letting me go free that binds my whole soul for ever. Other bonds will wear out or break, but this is a heavenly, godly thing. This chain will not rust. Love is an everlasting thing, for God 'is love.

To a woman who had been caught in the flagrant act of sin, and brought before him for judgment, Jesus said, without question or stipulation, "Neither do I condemn thee ; go." But what will become of the interests of morality, if you fling criminals off forgiven, making no preliminary condition, and taking no security for the future? Fear not ; the interests of morality are safest in the hands of the Holy One. His free pardon holds the

pardoned by the heart. In letting the sinner off, he holds the sinner still: "Go, and *sin no more*." Pardon, so bestowed, begets love; and love fulfils the Forgiver's law.

Free pardon is the only ruling power: either God rules you by that, or you abide his enemy. A forgiven soul is like this earth in space—set absolutely free, and yet held all and held always in constant, complete submission. Oh, to be forgiven! LET GO! Then and thereby would I be *held*. If the peace of God in Christ Jesus go about my heart and rule me, I shall neither go away from him in the course of life, nor be cast away from him in the judgment.

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